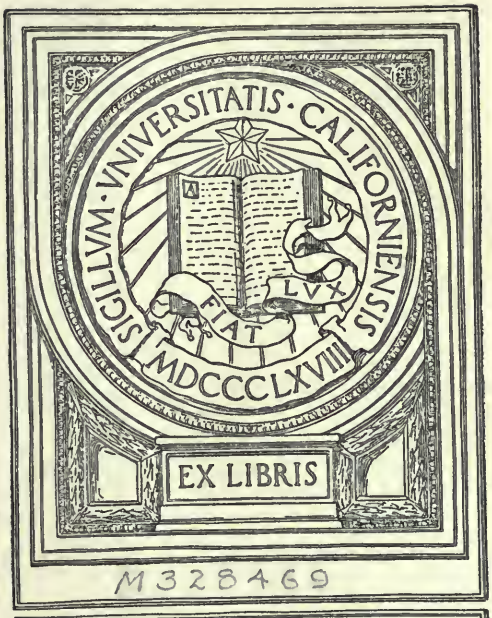
PR 535
F35
189



M328469

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/fellowehiswife00sharrich

COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 2813.

A FELLOWE AND HIS WIFE.

BY

BLANCHE WILLIS HOWARD AND WILLIAM SHARP.

IN ONE VOLUME.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By B. W. Howard,

ONE SUMMER	1 vol.
AUNT SERENA	1 vol.
GUENN	2 vols.
TONY, THE MAID	1 vol.
THE OPEN DOOR	2 vols.

The Ivory Sculptor

A

FELLOWE AND HIS WIFE

BY

BLANCHE WILLIS HOWARD,
AUTHOR OF "GUENN," "THE OPEN DOOR," ETC.

AND

WILLIAM SHARP.

COPYRIGHT EDITION.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1892.

"A fellowe almost damned in a faire wife."—OTHELLO.

COUNT VON JAROMAR: BLANCHE WILLIS HOWARD.

COUNTESS VON JAROMAR: WILLIAM SHARP.

"Irresse"

The Ivory Sculptor.

A FELLOWE AND HIS WIFE.

I.

From the Countess Ilse von Jaromar-Ilsenstein to her husband, Count Odo von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
VIA GREGORIANA, ROME.
Thursday, 27th October.

AMICO MIO—

You see how Italian I am already! You will note at a glance that I am no longer at the Hotel d'Italia. A most fortunate thing has happened. You will remember how pleased I was when our good neighbour, Count Paul Waldeck, promised me an introduction to Friedrich Herwegh,

the sculptor. Well, I had not presented the letter, but when dining two nights ago with our friends Ulrich Heideloff and his wife, I met Herwegh. He is a splendid fellow. One is nearly always disappointed in expectations of famous people, but our great sculptor is an exception. True, he is younger, in aspect at any rate, than I had anticipated; but as for that, well, so much the better. The Heideloffs quite embarrassed me by all the kind things they said, but I was well aware that Herwegh was nothing more than courteously interested, till Lotta led him to the corner of the *salon* where my little ivory "Diver" stands, in what I told my amiable hosts is the most charming and flattering isolation. You know the one I mean? Not the "Diver" I sent to Berlin, but that which I made last summer at Thiessow, from Caspar Mohl, the son of the old boatman who used to take us about so much. It is the one which stoops forward, looking intently into imaginary depths. Herwegh gave a

rapid glance, first at it, then at me. But he kept silent so long that my heart sank. Ah, my dear Odo, it throbbed quickly enough when he turned to me and said: "You did this?" and added, "So, you are a sculptor indeed. That 'Diver' is not flawless, but there is nothing amateurish about it. You must work, work, work; study, study, study. Do you know that there is not a woman —well, never mind. And now, Countess, when will you come and have a talk with me? Will you come to my studio to-morrow?"

Of course I gladly agreed. On the morrow I went to his workroom in the Vicolo da Tolentino, close to the Piazza del Tritone, which you will remember. By the way, I *am* so glad you visited Rome after you left the university, for I need not bore you with descriptions and raptures and reflections; and yet when I *do* wish you to have some definite idea, it is delightful to know that, from a hint or two, you can realize what is before me as I write. And again, as I am much more

interesting to you than Herwegh's sculpture—if I thought you would smile at this I should never forgive you!—I won't say anything about it at present. Only, I was glad to be there—to be with that great artist—to see his newly-begun and partly-finished works, with the rigorous, animating master-touch manifest everywhere. He invited me to be quite frank with him. You, who complain that I am so uncommunicative, would be surprised to hear me. I told him all—well, all that was needful. And, what do you think?—oh, I am so glad! He knew just the place for me to go to. He has friends, Gustav and Lilien Röhrich, who own the whole of the third *étage* of the Palazzo Malaspina. They are wealthy people, and are much away from Rome; but he assured me there would be no difficulty in my having a small suite of rooms there. The Röhrichs had offered this suite to him, but he preferred to be nearer his studio. He would, he said, go round to the Palazzo Malaspina and see them at once on my

behalf. Before I clearly understood, he was gone! I confess I was much perturbed till he returned. I did not know what to think. Moreover, I did not for a moment believe he would be successful in his quest; but the moment I saw his face I guessed my good fortune; and, indeed, I had not long to wait, for with him came Frau Röhrich, a pleasant and comely woman. Well, to be brief, I went back with her, saw the rooms, came to an arrangement, and thanked my guardian gods! The rooms are small, but their situation is all one could wish. The Palazzo Malaspina is an old palace nearly at the Pincian end of the Via Sistina; and it has two entrances, one in that street, and one in the Via Gregoriana. *My* rooms are gained by the latter, though the main entrance is in the Sistina. It is just the place for a romance; the daring lover can come in one way and go by another! Ah, but I am looked after by these good Röhrichs, so set your mind at rest! You must remember that saying in

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

your favourite Balzac: "What saves the virtue of many a woman is that protecting god—*the impossible.*" What a cynic! But you men are all alike. Well, I am to have three charming little rooms—a bedroom, a reception-room, and a small room which is to serve as my studio, with attendance, for 250 lire a month: a small sum, when one considers the advantages, the position, and so forth. They all face north-westerly, so you may imagine my view! I look right over Rome, and out upon the Ostian Campagna. To the right lies the Papal part of the city, and I can just catch the fringe of the gardens of the Pincio. I know you don't think much of King Umberto's Prime Minister, so you will be glad to hear that I too look down upon him—literally, for I overlook his house in the Via Gregoriana. But, to make good news better, Frau Röhrich told me I could get in at once. It is so good of them and Friedrich Herwegh. I can see that the 250 lire is only a nominal charge, as they knew I could

not come save as a paying tenant; had they really wished to gain by letting the rooms they would have charged at least 700 lire. Herwegh told me that his English friends, the Arnolds, pay 1000 lire for an indifferent apartment in this expensive Via Gregoriana.

Eccomi! Here I am, happily situated. I cannot tell you how elated I am at the prospects of this coming winter. I am going to work so hard. You will be proud of me yet, Odo.

By the way, this will amuse you. Some one on the staff of the *Fanfulla* took me for the wife of the new Russian Ambassador: "Madame Olgaroff is a tall and handsome woman, with that singular fairness which is essentially Scandinavian rather than Slavonic. She is quite young, certainly well on the right side of five and twenty. The unusual dark blue of her eyes is in striking contrast to her pure skin and lustrous bronze-gold hair. Madame Olgaroff was the most noticed person at the Reception, and both King Umberto

and Queen Margherita were clearly impressed by her stately beauty of face and figure and her winsome manner. The Russian Ambassadress was dressed"—but, no, my poor Odo, I won't inflict you to *that* point.

You know that I am vain, though of course you will deny having ever told me so. Still, I do not think, till I came to the description of the dress, that I would have guessed I was meant, though of course I knew some ridiculous mistake had been made. That time I stayed with your aunt in Berlin I met Madame Olgaroff, a commonplace, dowdy woman, and without a single recommendation save her high birth and immense wealth. And now in to-day's *Fanfulla* there is a correction to the effect that Madame Olgaroff was not yet in Rome, and that the lady who had been inadvertently described instead is that *illustrissima signora la Contessa Ilse von Ilsenstein-Jaromar.*

Thursday evening.

The Röhrichs very kindly insisted on taking me for a drive to the Villa Pamphilj-Doria to-day. I am astonished to find my childish recollections of Rome so little subject to change. As we crossed the Corso and drove past the column of Marcus Aurelius, and down through the narrow streets to the Tiber, I found that there was almost nothing that was new to me! True, I had never before seen the beautiful gardens of the Pamphilj-Doria—alone worth coming to Rome to see, says Herwegh, and I agree with him—but I had been on the Janiculum before, and well remembered the luxurious splashing of the water in the great fountains of the Acqua Paola, and that superb and unrivalled view from the terrace of the Spanish Academy across Rome to the Sabines and Albans. Do you know I had such a strange *Heimweh* all at once, when at the Villa. We had alighted to walk about a little. I forget if you know the place; if you do, you will remember the

narrow *lago*. I was strolling near it, and suddenly I came upon that small amber-yellow flower—I don't know its name—which grows in our north-sea islands. That day at Vilm—you know the day, dear—you gave me one, and said it should be called the Ilse-flower, because it was never the same long—constantly lighter or darker, but never the same. It all came back to me—you, and the island-forest, and all the dear homeland.

You told me once that I had not a spark of sentiment in me. You foolish boy!

Friday morning.

I fell into a dream last night, and so did not finish, and therefore did not post my letter. I am not going to tell you what my dream was, for to-day there is no letter from you, as I expected. I wonder—ah, here it comes! Of course: how stupid I am! It went first to the Hotel d'Italia.

Well, I have read your letter. It is not quite like you, Odo. Why, I cannot say. It seems constrained, and so unlike that which I found

awaiting me at Milan, and that at the Italia. What tiresome things letters are! they are either flowers without their wildwood fragrance, or little adders, all wriggle and sting! No, I am not going to write to you any more just now. Why do you lay so much stress upon "duty?"—"your duty," "my duty." The word is your Shibboleth just now. And I hate Shibboleths — and that quotation from Herder! It is excellent, but to what is it à propos? I was reading a French book in the train the other day, and there was a much more apt remark about duty there. "There is a magic in the word duty, something I know not what, which sustains magistrates, inflames warriors, and cools married people!" There, I have given you my Dupuy for your Herder. Think over it, *sposo mio!*

If you are good — but not otherwise — you shall hear again from your

Ever affectionate and dutiful

ILSE.

II.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR, RÜGEN,
November 3.

Your letter from the Palazzo Malaspina, my Ilse, scarcely reached our northern shores before meeting with strange adventures on land and sea. Among its rude experiences, it has taken an involuntary and prolonged cold bath . . . and by the four heads of the great god Swantevit, it needed no reduction of temperature!

Poor little letter! It is blotted and blurred as if by tears, a sorry plight for so light-hearted a thing. I have spread it out here before the fire, and smoothed it as well as I could, but its backbone is broken, and much of it is illegible; that bit of Balzac in one of his aberrations of intellect for instance, and the close, with its undertone. Why were you restive, Ilschen? What can I have said? Do I not know well that there is no conflict between your soul and mine as to

Lebe wohl! In your poor little mangled, desecrated letter a good angel has kept one precious place clear and unharmed for me—your remembrance of our day together in the Vilm forest. I have kissed it many times. I kiss and bless the hand that wrote it.

Odo.

III.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

Palazzo Malaspina, Rome,
12th November.

My dear Friend,—

Your letter, so like yourself, has touched me deeply. Never for an instant believe that I can be forgetful of or indifferent to our dear Jaromar and all its associations. But I wonder if you will understand me when I say that, at the moment —is it mood? is it some subtle change that comes *with* change?—I am not so much an alien in a foreign land as—how shall I say it?—the

recipient of a welcome letter coming to me from a strange country. Now that I have written it, my thought or fancy seems crude, *banale* almost. But perhaps you will understand; I hope so. Yesterday I was modelling my "Undine," and I cannot tell you what keen and strange delight the conscious shaping of my ductile material gave me, the mere manipulation of it, even, I am tempted to say. I felt as though a year had passed since I had *done* anything. Yesterday Friedrich Herwegh called upon me, and I remember one thing that he uttered, with that enigmatic turn which I recognize as characteristic of him. "There is no geography in art, and yet perhaps the south must ever hold herself aloof from the north." "And then?" I rejoined, half laughingly, glancing at him in a surprise by no means feigned. But he only looked at me gravely, then at my little clay model. "Speak to me about your north," he exclaimed suddenly, and with equal abruptness offered me a chair,

and made ready to seat himself near. What a strange man he is. He interests me deeply. I like a man to bear the insignia of his race. And yet, strangely enough, I am the more drawn to Herwegh from the fact that he is not unmistakably a German. He might belong to almost any European nation, and he might readily be taken for an American. He has that rapid adaptability which enables him to be of the nation of whatever sympathetic companion he may be with. In appearance he is a *dark* Scandinavian, as tall and athletic almost as you, my dear Odo, and perhaps of a paler complexion than the true northerner generally is. Thus it is, combined with his rare linguistic fluency, that he is by turns a Prussian or a South German, an Italian or a Spaniard, a Slav or a Briton, a Frenchman or an American. In a word, he is a typical cosmopolitan. I fear I must seem very parochial to him. And yet—but enough of Signor Herwegh, I want to speak to you about myself. How

happy I am here! I have often heard people say that Rome is a depressing place to dwell in. It may be so, but to me it is a stimulus as well as a delight. I could be quite content here if I did not know a soul. I smiled when I read those words in your letter about my intention to avoid general society; *of course* it is my intention to do so. But you men are so funny; if you say that you are not going to gamble, you will not even *look* at the coins in your pocket. Now, I have less than ever the intention to gamble, but I was dull, in a natural reaction after my travelling and excitement, and when the opportunity suddenly came in my way, I rose to it as suddenly as the salmon to the unexpected and tantalizing fly. People talk of Latin taste, and even these dear ignorant Italians repeat the favourite catchword of Paris; but I assure you that I never before saw so many ill-dressed women. There was one Roman *principessa* clad in staring blue silk all figured over with virulently scarlet pop-

pies—oh, no, I cannot even recall her without a shudder.

No, I am living so quietly that the Röhrichs smilingly affirm that I shall be known as a second Hilda. Do you know that *Transformation* was one of the books—Anderson's *Improvisatore* was the other—that used, in my girlhood, literally to *fever* me with a longing for Rome and Italy? How strange that it was *you* who lent me these books: the first in translation, for I did not then know English. And yet, why strange? Do you puzzle yourself like this sometimes, Odo? I do, often; about you, sometimes; about myself, frequently. This duality is so bewildering. I to be myself, whom *you* know, and whom *I* know—and then that other I, whom you do not know at all, and whom I only catch glimpses of as in a mirror, or hear whispering for a moment in the twilight.

Hilda? No, I am not a Hilda, though I seem to know her intimately. How delightful it will

be, some day in the hot summertide, when we are too idle to read and too light-hearted to dream, to carry on for ourselves the lives of some of those men and women of fiction in whom we have been profoundly interested. Can you tell me Hilda's secret story? What will you give me if I relate to you a new version of the latter days of Helen of Troy? Would you be interested to learn the inner life of Petrarch's Laura, of Michel Angelo's Vittoria? Is there another side to the story of Andrea del Sarto and his Lucrezia? Can you tell me the thoughts of Barbarossa as he grew his red beard, or the dreams of Theodoric the Goth while he looked out upon the South from his villa by the Latin sea? Would you like to see what Lili—no, what Charlotte von Stein chanced to be writing in her sentimental journal on that evening when, after three sleepless nights in consequence of Zimmermann's description of her, Goethe wrote below her portrait: "What a glorious poem it would be to see how the world

mirrors itself in this soul!" If you will tell me the rare imagings of George Sand when Chopin played to her in the gloaming, I will perplex you with the strange thoughts of Emilia Viviani after the English poet left her and wrote his marvellous "Epipsychidion." But we must distinguish; we will not waste our time with commonplace or vulgar personages. We have too many acquaintances of the kind about us always! No, I would give my "Diver" for a fantastic history of Heine's Sefchen or for the diary of Gaspara Stampa—that "Saffo di nostro tempo"—but I would not thank you for all the secrets of Byron's famous lady-love, La Guiccioli. Ah! what a wonderful poem, the "Epipsychidion." I am glad that I know English, if only to read it. In these last days I have heard much of this author, Shelley: that he was a strange man, and died young. His ashes are buried in the beautiful old God's-acre here, close to the Pyramid of Caius Cestius. Another beloved young English poet,

whose writings I do not know, is buried close by. Some day we must read together the finest things of Shelley, and this poor young Keats. A year or two ago, I remember, I read something by the former; a long poem which I did not understand aright, and so did not care for. But two nights ago, at the Heideloffs', there was an Englishman, a writer (I did not catch his name), and Herwegh, who was there also, said something about Shelley's grave, and this led on to his admission that a rich American had commissioned him to make a life-size statue of Shelley. This induced an animated discussion, and, somewhat to my surprise, I found that Herwegh is an enthusiastic admirer of this English poet—and, indeed, is a student and lover of all English poets. You will understand, therefore, with what pleasure I promised to avail myself of his generous offer to discuss and read to me on this subject. He talks as well as knows English so thoroughly, that the Heideloffs' English guest evidently took him to be

a compatriot. This is a splendid opportunity for me, as you are aware how anxious I am to know intimately the language and literature of this people, whom, in common with yourself, I at once like and dislike, admire and feel unattracted by. I am paradoxical, you see. Herwegh says that a woman utters paradoxes by the grace of God, and a man only from *maladroit* wit. When he came to see me yesterday, I asked him about the poem "Epipsychidion," which he had so enthusiastically praised. He at once recited it to me. I cannot tell you how deeply I was impressed. Shelley must have been half a woman. I have been in a kind of dream ever since. After we returned from the old Protestant cemetery—did I tell you that Herwegh kindly drove me thither yesterday to see the graves of Shelley and Keats, and others of all nations at rest there in that beautiful spot?—I sat for a long time through the late afternoon, dreaming that I was Emilia Viviani. I sat at the open window beside the

little balcony outside my room. A rare pink flush lay over Rome. Beyond the Vatican the wind played in the sky with fugitive wisps of vapour; long streaks, invisibly beginning and invisibly vanishing, and only midway fringed like floating seaweed or spraying upward like thin snow before a skater's feet. A little later the flush became amethyst. Suddenly a score or more of white pigeons flew upwards from the fountain in the Piazza di Spagna, and circled round and round before me, the upper wings of this bird-cloud touched with gleams of purple or gold. They rose and sank and rose again. Strange how such a thing should fascinate one so profoundly. I watched them entranced. Suddenly they rose, wheeled, and then, like one broad white pinion, swayed in a long slope, out of sight, westward. The beautiful flush over Rome was now almost a wine-dark purple. Though the day was not gone, I could see a star in the heart of the purple, wavering like a white light at a far-off

casement. And still I was Emilia Viviani. Do not think me foolish, Odo. I could not stay in my room any more, so I went out, up the Via Sistina, to Santa Trinità dei Monti, to hear the nuns singing *Ave Maria*. It did me good—*every way*. There was one of the good sisters who had a voice in which lived the inmost spirit of her life, a lost, thwarted, loving, utterly desolate life. I caught a glimpse of her. She was young and beautiful—or had been. When I stepped on to the terrace, which commands so superb a view of Rome, I met Herwegh. He, too, must have been in Santa Trinità, and must have seen my nun. He bowed gravely, and passed on, but as he did so he remarked, "Yet, we are told, youth is a continual intoxication."

I don't know how it is that I am often so struck by what Herwegh says. It is not always his words, nor their epigrammatic phrasing: neither is it his manner. I find myself very much in sympathy with him. However, I suppose I'll

see little of this *illustrissimo scultore* henceforth. He is a very busy man, and, I understand, also goes out into society a good deal. I am at once glad and sorry. But, after all, the more isolation I live in, meanwhile, the better for me and my aim in art. By the way, what do you think was the effect on me of yesterday afternoon, and (perhaps) of the nun's singing? I put aside my Undine, and am thinking over an ideal bust *in poco* of Emilia Viviani. This dead woman, whom I know of only through an English poet's rhapsody, has taken strange hold upon my imagination. For some inscrutable reason — some ridiculous whim, might be truer—I have conceived a dislike of her, even while she attracts me. But enough; I shall tire you.

My dear Odo, this is already a long letter, and yet I have taken almost no notice of the strange episode you narrate in yours. Do not, *please,* think me unfeeling or indifferent. Believe me, I have thought often and much of what you

wrote, and of all concerned, of the poor drowned people, and of those who wait afar off hoping for their return, of those whom you have succoured, and of poor Captain Albrecht, for whom I am sorrowful indeed; and, above all, of your brave dear self. Little did I think that my poor little letter was to be so sore beset. I hope this next northward swallow will be a more fortunate as well as a more welcome harbinger. Are you susceptible to those subtle influences which, in absence, are like spirits which wind an invisible veil around our memories, and swathe in some "fibre of oblivion" certain keys in the instrument of our life, and even missuade as by illusory lights and shadows which we unwittingly take to be our own thoughts, fancies, impulses? Or, I wonder, are men and women *really* different *au fond?* I heard that foreigner at the Heideloffs' the other night say that Newton had discovered the law of gravitation, that Darwin had demonstrated the secret of evolution, that Leeuen-

hoek had determined the pulse of an insect and the constitution of a germ, and that very soon we would be as familiar with the life of Mars as with the origin of coal; but where was the man who had really explored the inmost recesses of a woman's heart, or observed the hidden sources of those fugitive motives which differentiate her from the male of her species? We all laughed, but no one answered. After a little, Herwegh made the only trite remark I have ever heard him utter: "We have all heard much about the laying bare of the secret of 'Darkest Africa,' but a greater than a whole army of explorers will be the 'Stanley of Womanhood.'" It was somewhat commonplace after the other, but it made us smile again, and lifted us into a blither current of conversation. Still, I am puzzled. I wonder if you could help me, Odo. A great many things have been passing through my mind recently. For one thing, I am disquieted on a certain point concerning which I promised you to be silent.

But I must ask you to absolve me. I think you will guess what I mean. O Odo, I *do* wish to support myself, to *be* myself, to feel that I, a woman, am not a mere appendage. Do not mistake me, I pray you. I am not fretting at being so deeply indebted to you. I would fain hope myself free of the pettiness of conceiving your generous love as a bondage, however kindly veiled. It is not that I, Ilse Jaromar, wish to be free of monetary indebtedness to you, my husband; but that I, Ilse Ilsenstein, feel that I can neither be the artist I aspire to become, nor the woman I would fain be, if, voluntarily or involuntarily, I follow in the footsteps of another. My friend, is it not better so? Perhaps we do, deep down, regard life from a different standpoint. It may be. I do not even venture to say that I regret it, if so it be. Regrets are useless in the face of facts. One thinks of the nonagenarian sage who spent the seventy mature years of his life in regretting the inevitableness of his death,

and died at last with only a single emotion left —regret that he had regretted. Honestly, my friend, I am in great perplexity. I have pondered my affairs closely. You know that my aunt, Hedwig von Eulenburg, left me a legacy of a few thousand marks, to be paid to me on my wedding. Now, I have deducted all the marriage expenses in which I, personally, was involved, and those incurred here in Rome and *en route.* I find that, allowing for my indebtedness to the Röhrichs and for living and working expenses, I shall still have, at the beginning of the new year, which is already drawing in upon us, no less a sum than an amount well on the right side of five thousand marks. Now, I would rather expend this little capital in the way that seems to me most to my own good; and, to this end, I ask your help. I should add that I can hardly fail to make at least a *living* with my chisel. Herwegh assures me that, in this respect, the way is clear before me. Now, Odo, will you let me

repay the money you have so generously advanced? Nay, dear friend, I must not word my wish so, in justice to myself as well as to you: I *must* repay it. If you cannot, or will not, meet me, then at least will you take this money that I enclose, and put it at Frau Albrecht's disposal? It will help her to live over a bitter time. And you, *sposo mio,* will understand me in this? I am not cutting myself off from you, Odo; but as a woman, as well as an artist, I wish to stand *alone* for a time. To a proud woman—and I need not tell you that I am proud—this occasional isolation is as necessary as solitude to the student. I cannot explain more just now. But do you so far understand? Will you respect my wish? Bah! how foolish of me; there is a caller, and here I am with flushed face and tremulous pulse.

[Later.]

It was only Friedrich Herwegh. I must hurriedly finish this letter. He and the Heideloffs

are going this evening to the German Ambassador's—"an informal coffee," Herwegh calls it—and I am going with them. Only a few friends are to be there; no "dressing" I am glad to say. What do you think my wicked sculptor said? He had jocularly asked me if I were writing a romance. "Yes," I replied, "I have been writing about a woman's inner life." He smiled. I did not like it. I added, "and I was writing about a woman's power of holding her true self inviolate." "At Waterloo," he said, with quiet sarcasm, "General Cambronne remarked, 'The French Guard dies, but does not surrender.' Now, wherein women differ from the French Guard is, that they surrender but do not die." I stared haughtily, and plainly showed my resentment, but, with a mocking smile, he bowed and was gone.

Well, *lebe wohl,* my dear friend, I shall post this to-night, but I shall write soon again.

Hurriedly but affectionately yours,

ILSE.

P.S.—That poor little Margot. I am so sorry for her. I hope you will soon be able to send her back to her people; for her own sake she ought not to be kept long among foreigners, however kind. Poor child! Tell me, is she dark or fair? and how old is she? and—but I must go. Addio!

IV.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
November 13.

MY DEAR ODO,—

I had the most delightful evening. The informal gathering at our Ambassador's was really a family affair. I did not know that Lotta Heideloff was his cousin; as for Herwegh, though no relation, he had a right there as an old and intimate friend. For myself, I felt *de trop*. To my delight, I managed to slip away after a little, unobserved of my friend. I took a vettura and

drove to the Pincio. Oh, the sweet autumnal air! I stood for some time watching Rome in its afternoon glow. Trastevere gleamed like an onyx. Along the broad avenue below me, leading circuitously down to the Piazza del Popolo, a score of the young priests of the German College, clad in their brilliant scarlet robes, went by. Above a house in or near the Via Ripetta a tall, gilt Mercury rose, blazing with sunfire, out of a mass of velvety-looking shadow. But I cannot tell you all I noticed, all that impressed me. Besides, descriptions are even more uninteresting than haphazard daubings on a palette. Then I walked along the west walk by the huge walls that overlook the Borghese grounds. What a place for a tragic encounter, that gloomy Via delle Mura, which, like a ravine, divides Prince Borghese's park from the gardens of the Pincio. There was a rustle among the pines that made my northern heart suddenly ache. A redbreast, whom some poet has aptly called "the yellow

autumn's nightingale," sang a poignantly sweet snatch of song from the heart of a spurge-laurel. A silent thrush stirred restlessly in the heart of a dense mass of ilex. The silence was that creative peace wherein the soul takes courage and inhales new life. I was, half unconsciously, brooding over my Emilia Viviani, when of a sudden a clamorous fanfare of trumpets aroused me unpleasantly. As I did not wish to be entertained in that fashion at the moment, I walked swiftly across the gardens. As I left the gate, and stood for a few seconds (as I do every time I pass) at the beautiful wide fountain under the ilexes opposite the French Academy, I was accosted by Friedrich Herwegh. He walked home with me, and just as we reached my Palazzo (observe my calm possessive case!), we met Lilien Röhrich. She said she had been hunting for me, and made me promise to come in during the evening. I had to agree that I would sing also. "I am depending upon you and Herr Herwegh,"

she added, wickedly. I did not know he sang. It appears he is well known socially for his fine voice. He told me he would sing a little English song that he felt sure I would like.

And it was in truth, as I have said, a delightful evening. I met some pleasant people, and I was gratified by the wife of the Austrian Ambassador, who has bought the palace of the ruined Prince Annibale Vescovi, telling me that her husband was so delighted with my little ivory "Diver," that he would not be content till he had one or two rivals from my chisel. There, you see, Herwegh was right.

I sang two German songs, and then a French one, which I have never sung to you; at least, I think not. The words are by De Musset, and begin—

"Quand on perd
Par triste occurrence
Son espérance
Et sa gaieté,

Le remède
Au mélancolique
C'est la musique
Et la beauté."

I was paid such a charming compliment *à propos* to the two closing lines.

Then Herwegh sang. Both his voice and the song itself affected me strangely. I understand it is by an—a young Jewess. He sings well; not, perhaps, so masterfully as I had expected, but with a certain thrilling lilt which is irresistible. I can remember only the first stanza; perhaps, indeed, it is the whole poem. Now that I think of it, I fancy it is—

"What does youth know of love?
Little enough, I trow!
He plucks the myrtle for his brow,
For his forehead the rose.
Nay, but of love
It is not youth who knows."

Is that not fine? but you should hear it wedded to apt music, and then sung by Friedrich Herwegh.

I was introduced to two Italians. Herwegh seems to know them intimately. Lucrezia Mallerini is a beautiful woman. She is a Southerner of Southerners in type. Herwegh called her a Græco-Romano-Etrurian type, which is somewhat too complex for me. She gave me quite an unpleasant sensation; and why? Do not laugh; 'twas her resemblance to my imaginary Emilia Viviani! She was very courteous in her chill Roman way. Yet I fancy—nay, I am sure—she does not take to me. She is, I think, a little too conscious of her beauty. Still less did I like her husband, Cesare. He is tall, dark, with a forbidding smile continually on his lips. She would do for a Delilah, he for a—for a—well, I don't know whom. It does not matter. I dare say they will improve upon acquaintanceship, for I am to see something of them, I suppose. They know the Röhrichs fairly well, and Herwegh almost intimately. I cannot imagine him being so enthusiastic as he professes about *la bella Lucrezia*.

I was at his studio today; and I looked to see if he had utilized her type in his sculptures. He had not. This puzzles me. Alas! if I do not stop, I German book will go without my letter. Addio,

VII.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
November 20.

Oh, Odo, how am I to answer your letter! A hundred things to say flash through my mind, and I cannot utter one! By turns you draw me irresistibly and repel me—make me feel that the world were well lost to be with you, and that never, never, never can we live together in that ideal friendship of which we have both so often spoken. What is it—oh, what is it? why do you make it so difficult for me? for it is you, *you,* Odo, who are causing all this misunderstanding, and not I. Oh, Odo, my dear friend, my best friend, there is such a pain at my heart. No true woman could read a letter like yours, and not feel proud of such love and abased at her own unworthiness of it. All my life seemed to go out to you at certain words. I am only your

foolish Ilse, and I cannot tell you what I feel in my heart. I can only say that though my eyes are too dry now after my tears, there is, as it were, something worse at my heart weeping and sobbing.

Odo, if your letter had been in the same strain throughout, I think—I think—I don't know what I think—perhaps I would have telegraphed to you to come to Rome; perhaps I would have left everything and everyone here and fled northward with but one thought—to reach Jaromar, to be with you, to hear from your lips what it is in your heart, to be like one of our north-sea fishermen, after long voyaging, dumb from sheer gladness to be at home again, merely to sit still, in utter content, realizing only, "I am at home—home at last."

But then—but then—you say words which chill me inexpressibly. I can hardly explain, I fear. You will think me foolishly sensitive, reading into your words what is not there. But some-

thing in me resents something in you. There, I have said it. Is it too harsh and crude? Do not mistake me, my friend; I do not mean that there is something between us that must of necessity keep us apart—that there is anything to justify your assertion, so emphatically and confidently made, that I do not love you. But, with all your courteous, nay, your chivalrous regard for me and my position, you unconsciously write, now and then, in a tone that I deeply resent. When you allude to my passionate desire for independence, for free scope for my art-life, for individual development, you are generally the Odo Jaromar whom I have known so long, my dearest comrade, my best friend. But when you write to your "unwilling wife"—they are your words, not mine—and, in lordly fashion, say, "You want your prancings and caracolings, take them," then you are no longer that comrade whom I love, but Odo von Jaromar whom I have married, and who looks upon Ilse Jaromar as a very different person

from Ilse Ilsenstein. Think of it, Odo, before you call me petulant or unreasoning. I am a woman, a proud woman, and, far short of my most moderate ideal of an artist as I am, I am yet sufficiently the artist to know that I have that earnest passion, as well as something of the power, to *create,* to work with heart, and soul, and brain, and hand, and every fibre of one's being. True, I *wanted* to come to Rome, but it was no whim that prompted me, no foolish caprice. I came *to find myself artistically;* I came to learn how to do the best that nature has put into my power to do. And then—then, you write, "You want your prancings and caracolings, take them." *Merci, mon prince!* How generous! My dreams, my hopes, my aspirations, my studies, my glad toil, my renunciations even (for I have renounced, to serve my end, though you do not understand), are "prancings and caracolings." Moreover, I am not here to prance and caracole by my own right and will, not even by the disposition of

Son Altesse le Bon Dieu, to quote your friend Boris; but because my excellent and amiable *sposo* autocratically says, "Irresponsible creature, as it is your nature to prance and caracole, you may!"

You see that you have angered me. Yet displeasure is a little thing. But one short phrase in your letter gave me a chill—not of momentary resentment merely—but of *dread.* Dread, Odo, of you, of myself, of ourselves, of this marriage-bond with which we have linked ourselves one to the other. If you can tell me that the phrase—a trivial little thing, you may think, to take so seriously—was a mere slip, a second's unconscious irritation, I will gladly forget it. But otherwise—well—here are the words. You say, "What if I go to Rome and follow you about like a spaniel," and then you add, "even if *I should attitudinize at church portals.*" When you said that, you insulted *me,* and you insulted my friend. Friedrich Herwegh may have his faults, but I do not be-

lieve he would say any such thing of you, were he to know you and have any real or imaginary cause of dislike.

Ah, I have half forgiven you! Perhaps more than half, you undeserving fellow! I was not going to read your letter again. I was going to forget everything in it that touched me to deep affection and admiration. I was going to be—ah, you cannot imagine what a haughty and unbending and altogether objectionable Ilse, when suddenly down came a great tress of hair, and made that smear at the corner over my malicious last sentence; and with it fell that amber pin you gave me a year ago. You know the one I mean? The small round ball, as transparent as yellow wine, and with the tiny little fly preserved in it from time immemorial. You found the piece yourself, after a wild storm along our Rügen coasts, and had it made into a hair-pin for me. It was almost our first quarrel *in a whole month* —and what a delightful one it was! I wanted

you to have it as a neckerchief-pin; you insisted it was to replace the beautiful ivory one I lost that day I fell among the bracken, after insisting upon looking at the hawk's nest you had discovered. Ah, what a fright I got when that fierce-eyed falcon almost dashed into my face; and how in the most undignified fashion I fell back, stumbled, and disappeared into a deep sea of fern; and how angry I was with you for laughing so uncontrollably, till I couldn't help joining, with the result that all the hawks in the neighbourhood must have been frightened out of their wits.

And so that little amber pin—I have kissed it, and put it in my hair again—made me think of many things; and I am quite sure that you are the best and kindest and noblest of all the Jaromars that ever lived, and that I am the most forgiving and delightful and lovable and *deserving* of all the Ilsensteins.

But I am not all smiles, though the frowns

have flown. Your letter has made me ponder deeply. I am glad that we are so much at one.

Your affectionate

ILSE.

VIII.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
November 21.

MY DEAR ODO,—

Since writing to you yesterday I have read your letter again and again. It is in the main a noble and true letter and like yourself—and yet!

Well, I *am convinced* that malignant sprites sometimes creep into one's letters, and weave such a spell about the simplest expressions that all kinds of horrid things are the result, and I am sure that an extra-large, an extra-malignant, and a horribly industrious sprite must have found its way into yours!

Something—I can't define it—keeps haunting, haunting me! I wish I could shake it off. I am so touched, so deeply touched by all you say. And, Odo, I *do* care for you, surely you cannot really doubt this. I *know* how true is my affection and esteem for you! But really, if—

Now I was going to say something that would anger you, my friend, but see—I have not! Instead, some foolish tears suddenly came into my eyes, and one little traitor has fallen on to my paper and made a great ugly, well-meaning "full stop" after "if."

Ah, those *ifs!* There was once a beautiful princess, and she was called *If;* and she lived in a lovely castle that was called *If;* and it was the most delightful place in all the world. And men came from all parts to that dear land beyond the Rainbow, of which If is the capital, and everyone wooed the charming princess If, and begged her to give them at least one word of comfort: and to each and all this good Genius—for that is

what she was—gave a magic word wrapped in a little veil of golden mist; so that every one went back into his own place well content. She gave it to the poor and to the rich, to the fortunate and the unfortunate, to the noble-minded and to the mean-natured, to the good and the bad; and each rejoiced in that little word, for it was the very image of the beautiful princess, and it uttered *If* in the most bewildering, satisfying way. The poor man knew what he would do; the rich man went to the springs of health with it; the fortunate and the good kissed it but flung it away, sometimes rashly and sometimes only at the Gates of Heaven; and the unfortunate and the evil held it up as a charm against the avenging Sword, and even thought to stay fate with its redeeming grace, and . . . Oh, Odo, Odo, I cannot write any more, I am so miserable! Yes, yes, I *will* write; see, I have controlled my foolish self again. But, alas, how easy it would be to give another version to my *If* story! It is a poor

wretched little elf without a soul, but with a smile on its lips and mockery in its voice.

But, Odo, you will have guessed something of what is in my mind. You cannot have forgotten how, when you said, "*If* my Ilse is the woman I take her for, she will come back to Jaromar," I answered, "*But* if your Ilse is *not* the woman you take her for, what then?" And again, Odo, you must remember how, the day before we were married, I drew you out of hearing of my father, and said to you in all seriousness, "*If* this thing that is to be between us, this bond of honour, prove a delusion, you must blame yourself as well as me. For I have warned you." And when you were about to interrupt eagerly, I added, "I do not know myself after all. I thought I did. I *must* go to this far-off Rome. But what if I '*find myself*' there, what if I know that Jaromar can never, never be to me"—and then, alas, I chanced to look at my father, and in the afternoon glow I saw that the seams in his long black

coat were almost as white as the hair that now falls about that dear worn face. I could not say another word; but, Odo, I must tell you *now* that when you clasped me in your arms and kissed me on the brow, I heard that miserable, *miserable* little word whirling in my ears: and all the next morning even, when the bells were ringing so blithely, their tune was a jangled one for me, because it was all *if*—*if*—*if*.

Shall I whisper something into your ear? Odo, dear, I have forgotten all the sadness and bitterness in your last letter; I have kissed it away! and I have forgotten all my stupid *ifs*, and know only and care only to know that I am Ilse Ilsenstein, your old play-mate and sweetheart; and that I love you, Odo—yes, that I love you.

But, my dear husband—see, I say it gladly and freely—if I have not drifted away from you, neither do I yet see the road that leads back to Jaromar. Surely, our love can wait. What is it in this thing "Love" that is so impatient? Why

does it vex itself so? If I were in love—nay, forgive the phrase, dear; I was speaking, as it were, as a spectator; you understand me?—I should think a calm, unquestioning patience the finest attitude for either man or woman.

Oh, dear me! I had so much I wanted to say to you, but there is that tiresome bell. I *know* it is some one coming to see me. Who can it be? Do you ever catch yourself wondering idly thus? And do you know at what I am wondering most just now? I will not tell you, for you would laugh at me. But I have coiled my hair in the way that old nameless sculptor did it in his "Woman of Athens," and—but no more! I hear him, or her, coming. Addio, dear Odo.

ILSE.

IX.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA.

Is it only an hour or so since I wrote to you, my dear Odo? It was with a start I realized this when I sat down at my little desk. It has your photograph upon it, in that old Danish silver frame you brought me one day from Copenhagen, and a little cluster of what the Romans call St. Agnes' roses, they are so tenderly pink and white, heaped about it. My letter to you has gone—is, indeed, already lost among thousands of others not half as charming and lovable and forgiving little notes, in that great whirlpool of correspondence in S. Silvestro in Capito, and so I cannot add a postscript to it: but, like a good and amiable Ilse, sit down afresh, pen in hand.

But—whirlpool! How that word has suddenly sprung up like a will-o'-the-wisp, and dances before me till my mind is full of you and

far-off Rügen instead of my late visitor. Ah, how well I remember you, when the spring tides were at the flood, and that whirlpool off the Black Rock—the Kelpie of Rügen, as the Thiessow fishermen call it—was surging horribly, like a torn cobra writhing in death throes, and how, when Peter Helder's boat was drawn closer and closer, with his little son in it, his only child, you dashed out in a small skiff, and by almost a miracle snatched the child from the heavy boat and managed to whirl round and round, but always edging further and further away from that sickening, foam-clotted spot. The men cheered you, Odo, and Peter Helder kissed your hands and sobbed with excitement, but not one of them knew as well as I did what a *hero* you were. And I know what it was that made you so ghastly white, even after, by your strong arm and dauntless nerve, you had won back little Jan's and your own life. It was not fear of death, but fear of losing me for ever and ever. It was then, you

told me long afterward, that you first knew what dumb longing was tearing at your heart.

Ah! is there in all this Italy a stronger, braver, or truer man than Odo von Jaromar?

And now, my friend, to my letter. Will-o'-the-wisp, adieu! I am in Rome again, and instead of watching you striving with the whirlpool, I am looking at my unfinished "Undine," and my freshly-modelled "Emilia," and a firm little ivory-paper calling-card with on it the words, *La Contessa Lucrezia Mallerini, Casa Barolo, Villa Ludovisi.*

I wonder what she is. I mean *in herself.* I have read, or heard, that a woman of the north can no more understand a woman of the south than a white swan can understand a black jaguar. Who said it, I wonder? I used to laugh at it as so stupid. But perhaps there is something in it. Contessa Mallerini has been so communicative and so winsome (for her), and yet I am no whit the wiser, and do not believe that I am even on the right track at all.

You have not forgotten my telling you about her, have you? I met her and her sombre husband, Cesare, recently at dinner, you recollect?

I had no idea till she came in that I had so identified my "Emilia Viviani" with her. It was startling; so much so, that as soon as I decently could I leant across my little table so as to shove up the swing lamp, and then dropped a loose pink silk scarf, which I was wearing, over the model. But either it caught or my visitor thought or pretended it did, for in a moment she had stooped, delicately snatched the scarf away, and with some gracious words protested her anxiety for my handiwork. But in a second she recognized the likeness. I saw her dark, lustreless eyes flash for a moment. I think she was about to speak about it at once, but she did not. We had a pleasant conversation, of a kind. She told me that she too is an artist. "Not a professional one, of course," she added, and I did not at all like the way she said it. For myself, I can quite

believe that these southern Italians never can understand northern women. She paints a little. So far as I can gather, music is her *forte.* I could not but feel annoyed at this, for the other night, when I sang my little De Musset song, she refused to sing. I wonder if she too is a contralto. Well, we chatted away. I offered her coffee, and she seemed pleased; though, for myself, I was already disquieted by her presence, and would have been glad to bow gracefully, and say, *"A rivederla."* Suddenly she began to question me about the technique of my work. How did I like carving in ivory? Does not the cost of the material make any real profit impossible? That it is sculpture *de luxe,* is it not? That I must be lonely, so far away from my husband? And so on. But all the time her eyes were wandering, wandering. "Yes," I replied, vaguely surprised at her interest. "I began that study of Emilia on such and such a day." "That was before we met," she said, quietly. Then I knew

what she meant. "It is an ideal study," I added, hurriedly; "a whim. I thought I would make an Emilia Viviani. Emilia Viviani was the woman whom the English poet Shelley loved, and—" "And about whom you heard from Friedrich Herwegh," she interrupted, with, I think, the worst possible taste. "You know Signor Herwegh well?" I asked. "I know Signor Herwegh well," was the reply, in a mechanical voice; "and I also know all about the 'Epipsychidion.'" What a strange woman she is. She lifted her head, and looked at me. For the first time I noticed she had two shadowy little wrinkles along her under-eyelids. I had fancied her not more than three or four and twenty; she may be five years older. The heavy Abruzzi lace she wore round her neck does not suit her so well as she thinks it does; personally I cannot understand how she can wear it. It is peasant's lace, you know, coarse in texture and workmanship. "You are looking at my lace, I see; I often wear this

Abruzzi stuff; it is to please my husband. He is feudal seignor of a district up in the Abruzzi, beyond Solmona." Now, I am perfectly sure that is not her reason at all. "Why, in heaven's name, should she say so, then?" you will exclaim; but *that* I cannot tell you. She was taking her leave at last, when she caught sight of my little ivory medallion of you. "And this: is it your husband?" She looked at it so long and scrutinizingly—or at it and the photograph together I should say, for she had taken up the latter—that I began to feel quite jealous. Altogether a most enigmatic young woman. She said several things that puzzled me. By the way, I spoke of jealousy just now. She asked me, looking at the portrait, if you were of a jealous nature. "Certainly not," I answered. I have promised to call on her soon; and she is to come here again ere long with her husband.

[Later.]

I had written thus far when Ulrich Heideloff and Herwegh called. He (F. H.) is a strange man. The other night he was affability itself when I asked him about the Mallerinis. A little while ago he seemed as chill as an iceberg when I questioned him about Signora Lucrezia. He was surprised, and apparently not pleasurably, to learn that she had paid me a long call, and he was rather rude. Every now and again there is something about Friedrich Herwegh that perplexes—indeed, even annoys—me. He is far more a southerner than a northerner. He professes the most ideal respect for women, and yet I have heard him again and again speak of them, individually, in a way that sent a little jar along my nerves. I fancy he does not at all care for my Contessa, and yet he says he admires her greatly. "She is a woman who must have had many lovers," I remarked questioningly. It was

then that he said one of those little things I do not like in him: "How cruel women are with that poisoned arrow, the past tense!" I felt indignant, for I never for a moment wished to imply that I think the Contessa Mallerini in any degree *passée.* But like your silly Ilse, I flushed, and then I saw that Herwegh was smiling maliciously. It is a pity that so fine a man should stoop to such little things.

[Midnight.]

Am I never to be left alone to finish a letter? I had just written the above when Lilien Röhrich came in "to keep me company." But, oh, dear me, I am tired of people. There was a man outside calling *"Limone—limone freschi!"* with the most wearisome reiteration. At last I could stand it no longer, and so I availed myself of Frau Röhrich's suggestion, and went with her to her rooms. She talked much to me about certain acquaintances we know in common. I see that

she does not like the Mallerinis, and that she has something amounting to a fear of Madame Lucrezia. She spoke most warmly of Herwegh. I have done him injustice. She says his *persiflage* means nothing. She told me some things about him which convince me that he is as admirable as a man as an artist. He has few real friends. Only women understand him. Yes, he is a fine fellow. To-morrow night I have promised to go to the Röhrichs to dinner. They are to have a score of friends. I am so tired. Good-night. ILSE.

X.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,
November 26.

You do not like my letter? So much the worse for me. I wish you liked it better than *ivoire vert*. But what can I do? The soul of me had to write it. At least, I thought so that night.

and amazingly appreciative and sympathetic, and I should not be in the way at all. I would be as docile as one of your little graven images, and we would stay a few months, and then we would come home to Jaromar right joyfully—and together. Odo.

XII.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
January 9th.

What a charming surprise. Imagine it, Odo. My little room is full of flowers—roses—roses—roses—red, white, and yellow. I came in out of the glare, for it is a scirocco day, after an early stroll on the Pincio, and here I am, like a nested bird—the only difference being that if I were a bird, I would sing out my small soul right blithely, while, as it is, I only hum to myself that dear, sleepy, humdrum, altogether delightful

nursery song we used to sing as children on Sunday evenings at Jaromar, "O schöne, schöne Blümchen, Ein Blümchen auch mein Herz!" Ah, human angels, as Jean Paul says, have no grand names; though, indeed, Röhrich is not such a bad name even for an angel. What kind friends they are! I know how it is. I happened to say at dinner last night that I loved roses at all times, of course, but that at the approach of winter I loved them tenfold. And these are such beautiful ones. I wonder where the Röhrichs got them. Those yellow blooms are Fiori di Monica, exquisite things with an indescribable fragrance, that are said to grow in August in the Pope's gardens beyond the Alban Lake. Flowers do make me so happy. I have a charming idea: I shall carve two lovely little ivory figures, one "Rose," and the other "Lily," and make each the very spirit of the flower it stands for. What a joy it will be to me to do this. But I am not going to restrict myself to carving in ivory. Next

week I am to model, under Herwegh's tuition, on a large scale. The other day I was driving with my friend on the Campagna, beyond the Porta Furba, and some miles out, just where the Claudian acqueduct sinks like a reef in an incoming tide, I noticed, under a broken arch, the loveliest boy I have ever seen. He was a young shepherd, and was clad in goatskin; but his legs were bare, and his brown throat. His large black eyes were ever so much lovelier than those of Lucrezia Mallerini, and he had that thickly-clustered black hair which is so like the heavy masses of the fruit of the hedge-ivy. He rose slowly, stretched himself, gave a long, shrill cry to his scraggy sheep, and then moved out of sight behind one of the acqueduct's ruined arches. I heard him singing softly to himself as he went, and could just catch—

"O bell—l—la!
B'la—a . . . . tal—ya—a
E'ssima . . . ."

and then, with a sudden, deeper note—

"Al mio, al mio, al mio cuore!"

And he certainly went to *my* heart, the beautiful boy. I tell you all this because I have decided to model a life-size statue of him, as I saw him when he had risen, and had thrown back his head with a panther-like grace, while he gave his strange shepherding cry. Herwegh has undertaken to secure him for me as a model; I hope he may be successful. If so, I shall begin next Monday, and at Herwegh's studio, of course. I am so excited about it. If I succeed in modelling in the clay in life-size, I shall make a replica in terracotta to send to the Salon in Paris! No! I am not yet an Immortal condescending to a Mortal! Now, don't laugh, Odo; for though I am laughing myself at my own folly, I wish you to sympathize with me with all your heart and soul.

I have stopped writing for five minutes, and

what do you think for? I could not resist those roses. I have made a wreath of those deep crimson ones, the Hearts o' Love, and crowned myself therewith, and I have pinned the Fiori di Monica in clusters about my neck till I am like another Clytie; and as for the others, each as lovely and fragrant as though this were the birth-day of June, here they are all lying in my lap in the most delicious confusion. My lips are wet with their cool dew. Ah, I must sing you that wild Spanish song I promised to translate for you. I have learned the native tune of it, a strange half-savage, lifting, falling, rising kind of chant, wilder than the words. It is gipsy music, and one can hear their fierce pulse beating through the haunting melody, so unlike anything I know.

"Roses, roses,
Yellow and red;
A rose for the living,
A rose for the dead!
Who'll sip their dew?

There are only a few
Of the yellow and red;
Youth sells its roses
Ere youth is sped.

Roses, roses,
All for delight;
What of the night?
Hark, the tramp, tramp,
The scabbard's clamp,
The flaring lamp!
Where is the morning dew?
Ah, only a few
Drank ere the yellow and red
Lay shrivelled, shrivelled,
Over the dead.

Roses, roses,
Buy, oh, buy.
The years fly,
'Tis the time of roses.
Here are posies
For one and all,
For lovers that sigh
And for lovers that die;
And for love's pall
And burial!

Roses, roses, roses, buy, buy, oh, buy!
Why delay, why delay, roses also die.

Pink and yellow, blood-red, snow-white.
Roses for dayspring, roses for night!

Buy, buy, oh, my roses buy!
A kiss for a kiss, and a sigh for a sigh!"

There, now, if you do not say something nice to me for that, I shall never, never sing to you again!

Addio, dear Odo; I am so happy. How I love Rome!

Ever your affectionate

ILSE.

P.S.—I forgot to say that I now see my way to keeping myself! Besides, I see how I can reduce my expenses by at least four *lire* a day. I have made an arrangement at a Trattoria in the Via Capo le Case close by. Lilien Röhrich, who has just looked in, is amused at my carefulness. She says I shall make a capital *Hausfrau!* What do you say to that, Odo? I must close; I am going out with her. She envies me my wealth

of roses, and can't think where they come from. In this mystery I am going to fall back on His Holiness the Pope!

A good thick letter from you has this moment come. I cannot stop to open it, for Lilien is waiting.

XIII

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,
December 7.

MY DEAREST ILSE,—

I am going to ask you to cease your pretty poetic soarings for a while, and scrutinize more closely the somewhat miry ground beneath your feet. I have thus far refrained from expressing my opinion of your associates. In the first place, you have not requested it; in the second, I shrank from the *rôle* of Cassandra. Then I trusted you boundlessly. You are clever, sensitive, and good. To such as you, slimy things do not cling.

"Wem Gott will rechte Gunst erweisen,
Den schickt er in die weite Welt,"

said the poet, and, I fancy, foresaw your case. Why should you not meet and know all sorts of people? You would inevitably be confronted with unpleasant experiences, but why not, I reasoned? Why should a woman not make the best of them and learn from them as a man does—or at least ought? The time is past when we wrapped her in cotton-wool, and believed that if a breath of gossip blew upon her, her reputation was irretrievably tarnished. Only tinsel tarnishes so easily. Pure gold can bear rough handling. Reputations are happily nowadays less fragile and anæmic than formerly. They meet many ill-winds, yet remain strong, sound, and sweet. It is not then from motives of narrow conventional caution that I speak. This I think you will believe.

Ilse, little Ilschen, dear little girl—you are so appallingly clever, you dance about so alluringly

would be sunny and clear again. And the joy! It takes away my breath—the mere thought of it! And you could go back immediately. Will you not consider it in all its bearings? Ah, Ilse! Ilse! *come!*

XIV.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
December 11.

No, no, no, a hundred times no! How foolish you are! It does seem to me so extraordinary that you cannot, or will not, understand. Why should I not see so much of Friedrich Herwegh? He is one of the best and kindest of friends. I can't tell you how much I owe to him. And now that I go to his studio five mornings in the week, I seem to be learning my art by *strides*. Of *course* he means much to me. Why shouldn't he? I am the better every hour of the day for his help and guidance; and he is so entertaining.

Besides, I have found the earnest side of him. He sees not only that I am not a woman of the kind he is accustomed to meet, but that he has been mistaken in his common attitude towards women generally. He told me this himself. He has very fine qualities. Now, why should you wish me to be without such a friend? I am likely to get nothing but good from him, while I am not at all sure of the benefits of association with the Mallerinis; and yet you do not warn me against *them*.

I hate these misunderstandings; but I am not to blame. No, Odo, I am not in the least anxious to be at home at Christmas. If it is a fine day, we (that is, the Heideloffs, a Mr. Graeme, an English artist, with his young wife, and Herwegh, and I) think of going to St. John Lateran, to hear and see High Mass celebrated by Cardinal Fabrizzi, and then of going by carriage to Marino, and of walking thence to Castel Gandolfo, and then on by the ilex-avenues to Albano, where

we shall dine, and then drive home across the Campagna.

I am looking forward to it immensely. The North seems to me very chilly and gloomy.

But I'll think of you at Jaromar, and drink your health in the pleasant *vino de Velletri;* but only if you are good, and if I have another and pleasanter letter before Christmastide. I am much perturbed about your letter. I do wish you were not always thinking of me. Surely we can be husband and wife, and yet not always fidgeting about each other. I am not a child.

And now, pray, *per amor di Dio,* do not conclude that I do not love you, or that I am drifting away from you, because I speak what is in my mind. I cannot work when I am perturbed. I have lost my precious morning, and I don't know what Herwegh will say to me.

But I won't scold you any more just now. What glorious sunbathed days we are having. It

is probably drip-drip-dripping, or snowing, or freezing, at Jaromar. Ugh! I shiver.

Your affectionate

ILSE.

XV.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
December 14.

DEAR FRIEND,—

I am so happy to-day. It seems, as I sit here at my open window, and with my doves (I call them mine, for three of them have grown quite tame, and come often to my window to be fed and stroked) flying backward and forward against the beautiful intense blue of the sky, that into this warm Roman air, wherein, alas, garlic, and what my trim Lisa calls "pitiable odours," mingle with delicious fragrances from a small roof-garden that would be below me if my house were to make "a reverence" towards His Holi-

ness over the way—say for ten yards. "O Ilse, that full stop!" you will exclaim; but, *caro mio,* the sentence was so long, and, moreover, I wanted to tell you that I can hear the splash-splash of the great fountain in the Piazza di Spagna—another faint echo-splash, I do believe, from either the Fontana di Accademia or the Tritone (for I don't know which way the wind is), and a delicious gurg-gurgling from our dear, ridiculous, puffy, impossible bronze river-god in the court below me. This gladness of falling water everywhere in Rome makes me so happy. It is like children's joyous laughter floating across one of our old north-country graveyards. But, there, what a hopeless person I am; I shall never get on with my sentence. And no wonder, you would say, if you could see me and my surroundings for a moment. Such a delightful fancy seized me this morning—to model a little Spirit of Fruit. To this end ("O deceitful Ilse! I know too well your insatiable love of fruit for you to

deceive me by so palpable a ruse," you will cry —but unjustly!) I have expended—no, I won't tell you how many *lire,* upon a beautiful heap—it is not only the best word, but the *only* word—of blood-red, dark purple, dusky yellow, and pale green grapes, large, violet-hued plums, some long, thin jargonelles, a pile of delicious country-bumpkin-looking apples, some trying to be all sunny-yellow or gold, and others literally swelling with ruddy pride, and, lastly, about a dozen large divided pomegranates, so full of wine-dark juice as to look like cocoanut-cups filled with claret and bruised rasps. I bought the pomegranates yesterday from an old woman who has a broken-down, rickety fruit-stall close to the Trevi fountain, near the Trajan Forum. She was amazed at a *Signorina da cielo* buying so many of these bulky pomegranates, and insisted upon sending them by her (invisible) grandson, till I explained that I had my little carriage close by. She called me "her daughter," a "heavenly angel" (which,

by the way, was a neat compliment to herself too!), a "blessed Signorina, whom all the Saints would, or should (I forget which) protect for ever," her "generous and noble benefactor," and I don't know what else.

* * * * * *

This line represents a blank of three hours. I have been lunching with some friends, people I met when I was at the Hotel d'Italia. What a noble work, that head of Juno, at the Ludovisi! Oh, dear me, what a child I feel when I am beside some of these superb creations of the old Greek sculptors. I grow so despondent that—that—well, that I feel fit only for the company of Charlotte Bodenfels. I am glad you snubbed her as you did. What an intolerable woman she is, how intolerable her kind!

But, my dear Odo, this brings me to something I wanted to say to you. She wrote me the other day, very unwarrantably, of course, of "Margot." If for no other reason than that the

world, and at present I mean by this liberal phrase only our own little world betwixt the heights of Ilsenstein and the forest reaches of Jaromar, always listens to the gossip of the Charlottes whom you and I dislike so much, even when it pretends to condemn and discredit; if for no other reason than this, I do think it would be advisable, from every point of view, that your *protégée* should now leave the Schloss. It would be easy for you to find accommodation for her. I am sure that Parson Hiller and his good wife would take her in and be kind to her, till news from her home come, which, for the girl's own sake, I trust will be soon.

Then, again, I put it to you frankly: is it—is it—*O Dio mio,* what word is it I want?—well, is it quite *seemly* for Mlle. Borike to settle down at Jaromar as if it were to be her home for ever? Even dear, stupid old Walpurga must see that it is now time her beloved Margot took flight again —like all other wind-blown things.

Seriously, Odo, I ask you to consider and, indeed, to meet my wishes in this matter. You will do me the justice to believe that I urge my plea in all good faith.

In haste, or I shall miss the post,

ILSE.

P.S.—If Malzahn and Freolin are with you, and you are expecting other men at the Schloss, all the more reason for doing *at once* what I now urgently beg of you.

XVI.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,
December 18.

DEAREST ILSE,—

Margot will remain. I regret not to be able to meet your wishes, but the "wind-blown thing" has taken root. As to the question of propriety, whether it is, as you say, "seemly" for her to be

here, I broke into "Homeric laughter" at the inconceivable *naïveté* of this solicitude—for us—on your part. I don't pretend that it was happy mirth, or lasted long. But pardon me for retorting that your request is, under existing circumstances, deliciously droll, and I should be considerably more amused by it if it did not also make me sad—and savage.

Where was your sense of humour wandering when you wrote this letter? Surely that, if nothing else, ought to have prevented it. Consider, Ilse. Shall there be liberty, equality, fraternity for you and your satellites, and none at all for Margot and me? Since when has so obsequious a regard for conventionalities dwarfed your judgment, your courage, and, pardon me, your generosity? And if Charlotte Bodenfels is the guardian of our honour and domestic peace, our counsellor and guide, perhaps it would be instructive for you to know what tales she has sown broadcast over the country, obtained from

and gave her another. It would be a dastardly thing to turn her off because old fools like to chatter. The sea gave her to me. That night I seized her myself and dragged her into the boat, and afterwards when we found that there was life in her still, Malte and I drew the little thing away from her dead father and mother, and brought her up here, and I carried her in my arms across my threshold.

And here she shall stay as long as she likes. Not even for you will I send her away, and whoever harms her has to reckon with me. But be very sure, nobody will harm her. That she is a lovely girl, seventeen years old, I and others, having eyes, perceive; but also that she claims in a peculiarly sacred way the protection of my house.

In the village where the little "Ma'm'selle" is as welcome as sunshine, among my guests who only see her flitting by, but accord to her the deference due to a daughter of the house, no one

is so careless as to forget under what circumstances she was tossed upon our shores. And Ilse, dearest, this you will have to concede, it is not Margot's fault, or mine, that there is no chaperon for her here. It would break her heart to know you wish to send her away, for she worships you. She contemplates your picture with mute and tender adoration, such as she gives her own Sainte Marguerite. Every day she brings you offerings of fresh flowers, and I suspect she says her prayers to you. Poor little benighted girl, how can she!

ODO.

XVII.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
December 22.

DEAR ODO,—

My plans for Christmas are all changed. Cesare Mallerini's brother, Egidio, is coming from Paris with his French wife, and *il Conte* is going

to keep open house at his villa near l'Ariccia, between Albano and Nemi, in the Albans. It is an unusual thing for an Italian to do; but it will be interesting. The Röhrichs are going for a week, and I with them. I believe that Herwegh will be the only other foreigner. We leave Rome to-morrow. I cannot imagine Christmas in the Villa Mallerini. Fancy Count Cesare as a convivial host! Nevertheless, I am looking forward to the visit with eager curiosity; even the Röhrichs are curious.

Lebe wohl, my friend, a hundred happy Christmases to you; I am too busy to write more just now; forgive so brief a note; I kiss my love to Jaromar.

In great haste,

Your busy and excited,

ILSE VON JAROMAR.

P.S.—If you write to me a day or two after Christmas, address your letter to La Contessa Ilse von Jaromar, Villa Mallerini, l'Ariccia, per Albano.

XVIII.

From the same to the same.

VILLA MALLERINI,
Christmas Morning.

"Noël, Noël,
Belle Louise!
C'est moi,
Belle Louise!
Sst! Sst!
Dans le parc,
Par le lac,
Sur les prés,
Siffle la brise!
Pfiss—pfiss!
Fiss—Fiss!
Au ciel
La—ra—la!
Aux montagnes
Ha, Ha, Ha,
Chante la brise!

"Où sont les neiges,
Belle Louise?
Voyez ma tête,
Belle Louise,

Ha! Ha! Ha!
Car c'est moi,
Belle Louise,
Car c'est moi,
C'est Noël!"

It was so lovely this morning, that away I went before breakfast, and literally danced down the solemn ilex avenue that leads from the house to the terrace on the higher ground called the Buonavista. And, oh, what a view! I saw all the Campagna bathed in living blue light, delicate beyond words, and purple only where the Maremma lay leagues long against the sea. The latter was quite visible, a wavering, dilating, contracting, receding, advancing band, of the most extraordinarily vivid and brilliant pale-green. I am sure that nowhere else in the world did anyone see a lovelier Christmas morning. It was so warm and bright, too. Over a mass of the beautiful pink and white Fiori di Natale a great yellow and orange tiger-moth tried to pass himself off as a butterfly. I chased it for a dozen yards or more,

and then it gave a scornful tilt to its wings, and swung upward into the shadow of a great stone-pine. Then I went and looked over the terrace wall, beyond which runs one of the many charcoal-burners' paths that intersect all the woodlands hereabout. A muleteer was passing, with his four-footed companion stalking along beneath what seemed to me a ridiculously impossible load of faggots, which literally let only the head and wriggly, hairless tail be visible. I could not help calling out, *"Buon' giorno, Signore! Fa bel tempo!"* The roguish fellow gave me greeting for greeting, and then suddenly burst into a wild song, which, so far as I could make out, consisted of endless *stellas* and *bellas*, and *carrissimas* and *benissimas*. But when the rascal plumped on his knees, and kissed both his hands frantically, and called upon me by all the saints in heaven to have pity on him, for all the world like the melodramatic *tenore* in that ridiculous opera we saw together in Berlin, I could no longer restrain my

laughter, but shrank behind the terrace literally convulsed. Then suddenly—no, Odo, no hair-breadth escape, no startling episode, but simply your very earthly and commonplace Ilse became most unromantically hungry! I tried hard to look across that glorious Campagna, with all its innumerable hollows brimming over with pale blue mist, and to think of the Fatherland far away beyond the unseen Apennines, and of distant Jaromar, and of you, and to imagine that I heard the bells ringing, and all the villagers and fisher-folk hurrying to hear good Pastor Hiller say again just the same things he said last year, and for thirty odd years before, and—and—*of everything*, but, alas! the flesh prevailed!

So ignominiously I fled back, singing as I went my blithe French song, the words and gay tripping tune of which I picked up lately; I scarce know how. Perhaps you can guess the time if you read the nonsensical linelets quickly and lightly.

I had just sung out (and, I'm ashamed to say, at the pitch of my voice)—

"Ha! Ha! Ha!
Car c'est moi,
Belle Louise,
Car c'est moi,
C'est Noël!"

when I came full tilt upon two sombre-looking, scandalized priests, or rather one of them was a bare-footed, unkempt, cowled Franciscan monk. They positively scowled upon me, as though they were a couple of heaven-rewarded St. Anthonys, and I were the reprehensible siren who had almost caused them to fall into backsliding, and the consequent pit! At the first glance I did not see that Cesare Mallerini was with them. What an ungracious fellow he is! He bowed coldly in response to my salutation, and when I laughingly added something about Christmas, he gave a sidelong glance at his priestly companions, and very rudely muttered that in Italy *il giorno di Natale* was a day for religion, and not for keeping car-

nival. I like him less and less, I admit. Even when he is most polite, there is a cruel look in his eyes, a sneer on his lips.

Well, Christmas morning at any rate has gone happily. I have had my breath of fresh air, my breakfast, and my conscience is clear in having written this letter to you. We are now going for a drive over to Castel Gandolfo and Marino, and back by the low road to Cecchina, and thence home again by Genzano. It will be charming. You can think of me singing my little De Musset song that my friends here like so much, even if you do prefer Horace!

"Le remède
Au mélancolique
C'est la musique
Et la beauté!"

And Herwegh is to bring his guitar, and has promised to sing *canzoni* and *rispetti* of every province in Italy, with all the peculiar words and accents, Venetian, Tuscan, Sicilian, Calabrian, and so forth. You would smile if you saw the turn-

out; the carriage is an ancient *chaise-de-luxe,* and one of the two horses is a rusty black, while the other is a piebald! Oh, dear me, is it wicked to laugh at things as I do?

But I'll leave this open in case the Roman post comes in before we go out for our drive.

XIX.

From the same to the same.

VILLA MALLERINI,
L'ARRICCIA,
December 26.

MY DEAR ODO,—

What a wild night it is! I can easily imagine myself at Jaromar, or by the forlornest shores of our native north. The wind that sweeps howling up from the Campagna might be that which hurls its sleet against the windows of our Schloss. I am so restless. I cannot sleep; I cannot read; I doubt if I can even write long. What a melancholy place this is! It is difficult to believe that

I am in Italy. Christmas day was so gloriously bright and warm; I even heard an unwary thrush trying over one of its lost April songs. Poor thing, it failed miserably. What did it think to-day, I wonder, when the sky grew grey and then sooty-brown, and a chill sighing wind moaned up from the Maremma! I wish you were here, Odo. Everything seems to have gone wrong to-day. After dinner, the violence of the gale was so great, that we all instinctively spoke in lowered tones. The only person who affected cheerfulness was Herwegh, but I must say he did not succeed. Even his good spirits were damped after a while; to my relief, for he did not seem himself. It was a *horrid* meal. Lilien Röhrich had her dinner in her own apartment, as she had a headache, and her husband was absent, having gone to Rome for the night. The other Christmas guests have left. At the table there were only our two hosts, Egidio Mallerini and his wife Aurore, Herwegh and myself. Long before the meal was over we had

subsided into complete silence. Cesare Mallerini stared straight before him, a stony glitter in his eyes. Lucrezia sat back, even more frozen, if possible. I could not see her eyes, as she never raised them, or only so swiftly that they evaded my searching glance. Egidio and his wife were as impassive as practicable without obstrusive rudeness. As for Herwegh, after his collapse he was as reticent as the rest of us. Unfortunately, we were at opposite sides of the table, and so could do nothing to relieve the strain. It was scarce better when we were in the *salon.* I was asked to sing, but had not the spirit for it. Lucrezia chillily declined. Madame Aurore indulged us with some Parisian school-girl music, for all the world like a company of bats shrilling and gibbering. She tortured these poor high notes till—but there, never mind her; I daresay she pleased Signor Egidio. I wonder what is the matter. Perhaps the brothers have fallen out—or their wives. Perhaps it is all due to a matri-

monial quarrel. Perhaps Cesare and Herwegh have began hostilities. What makes me think that this guess may be near the mark is that he (Herwegh) did not speak to his hostess after we went into the drawing-room. Yet her eyes watched him like a cat's! Altogether, this is a fitting end to a wretched evening. I meant to write you a long letter about our Christmas doings, but I find myself quite unable. We *had,* however, ample entertainment, though it is only fair to Herwegh to add that without him we should have found the hours, particularly in the afternoon and evening, somewhat heavy. It would be absurd to term either of the Mallerinis genial, but they were courteously agreeable. My hostess even went so far as to call me Ilse (which she pronounces deliberately), and to ask me to address her as Lucrezia. But I've forgotten all about Christmas by this time, and can think only of this forbidding day, this sullen evening, this dreary eerie night, which makes me so nervous.

I wonder if it is another such night with you. I wish Jaromar were not so far away. I feel more *alone* to-night than I have ever done in my life. I wonder if I were to call you, Odo, would you come to me? If I were to . . .

P.S.

PALAZZO MALASPINA, ROME,
December 27.

You will, to your amazement, see by this P.S. that I am at home again! I was just about to tear up the foregoing unfinished letter, but I leave it as it is. It will help to explain.

Read the last sentence of it again, and then imagine me dropping my pen in sudden sickening affright, and calling out I know not what! For just as I was wondering idly if you would come at my summons I looked up. The door had silently opened, and a tall white figure stood in the semi-darkness. But though an indescribable fear possessed me for a moment, I saw at a glance that it was Lucrezia Mallerini. Yet I was almost

as unnerved when I recognized that woman as when I thought, for the breath of a second, that my prayer had been answered by the dead. She had a most evil look on her face. It was deadly pale, and her eyes were like luminous jet. At last I rose very slowly, and then, having regained my control, spoke. "Well, Contessa, do you wish to speak to me? I did not hear you knock." She did not answer, but stood looking fixedly at me, and then let her gaze wander round and round the room. At last she moved. Having closed my door, she crossed to that of the small dressing-room, raised a small lamp from a side-table so as to examine the interior. Naturally, I concluded that she was suspicious of eaves-droppers, though I was quite unable to guess what she wanted to confide to me. The rain slapped the window panes viciously, and in every hole and corner of that old house the wind howled or shrieked or moaned. Her first words, uttered in a savagely ironical tone, startled me. "When

are you going back to Rome? To-night?" I admit that I at once jumped to the conclusion she was mad, yet as she had no appearance of frenzy, I had no other course than to treat her as though she were not. "If you wish to be relieved of my company, Contessa Mallerini," I exclaimed, "you may be sure that I will not long inconvenience you. But, obviously, I can scarce leave this solitary place on such a night as this." Strangely enough, my answer seemed to suit her. Her tense look relaxed somewhat, and she even made a slightly deprecating motion with her right hand. "Excuse me," was, however, all she said, and in a cold, formal way. I waited, at first patiently, and then impatiently. The wind had a wail in it that made me shiver, and I felt as though the very stones of the wall must be soaked with the steady *slush-slush* of the rain. "Did you hear the noise?" she asked me suddenly. "What noise?" I demanded, listening intently, and startled by her question. "The shots, half an hour ago."

"Shots! no, I heard none. If there were any I should not have recognized them in this wild night." After that, another prolonged silence. I began to understand. Lucrezia was hysterically nervous; there was no doubt of it; she had been upset by the savage and unwonted violence of the gale. "I am going to bed," I said, gently; "do you not think you would be wise to do the same?" "Yes, Signora, if you will permit me to rest *here,*" was her reply, in a strange voice and with a stranger parody of a smile. I pressed her to occupy my bed, but she refused. All she wanted was to sit in my large arm-chair. It was impossible for her, she said, to sleep during that tempest, and she felt better beside *me*, but she would feel still better if I were to go to bed and to sleep. At last I *did* lie down, though, not unnaturally, sleep, for all my weariness, would not come to me. After an hour or so I was, however, just about to doze off when, through my almost closed lids, I caught sight of Lucrezia

rising from her chair. She stealthily moved my letter to you till it was within the faint illumination from the corridor lamp, and then I saw her turn it over and read the beginning. I was so indignant that I almost sprang from my bed; then I nearly laughed at her chagrin, for she knows little or no German. Bnt when she replaced my letter, she did not seem chagrined, only weary, and strained, and curiously intent. It must have been nearly an hour later when she suddenly rose again. This time she went to the window, and crouched behind the curtain. My heart beat, for I thought she *must* be mad. I knew that she was listening with all her nerves alive. But there was nothing, save the rising and falling wail of the wind, and the sudden flurry of sleety rain. I saw her lean forward and peer so intently that at last she almost touched the glass of the window. To my relief, after some minutes, she went back to her chair. I fancied she had fallen asleep at last, when I heard a sob. But as

absolute silence followed, I thought it best to take no notice. I must have dozed shortly after, for when I sat up with a start I saw she was no longer in the room. It was close on dawn when she returned. With the first dull gleam of day the wind abruptly ceased. I heard the rain still, but it was softly incessant, and had that trickling sound I used to get so weary of when it dripped among the lilacs under my window at Ilsenstein. I never can understand why people lie objectlessly. When Lucrezia rose once more she noticed that I was awake. "I am glad the storm is over, my friend," she began hesitatingly, and added, "but I have slept well, thanks to you. I dropped off to sleep as soon as you did, and it seems scarce five minutes ago." I felt contemptuous as well as angry, and made no effort to detain her. The night she passed certainly did not improve her. She looked wretchedly wan. That ivory skin of hers was quite yellow, and her dull black eyes were as lack-lustre as sodden coal. Well, I dressed

rapidly, and ere long was ready for breakfast. When it was brought to me, I found Ermerilda, the maid, exasperatingly reticent; but what I did gather made me decide to leave for Rome as soon as I decently could. It appeared that there was an accident last night. I could not understand Ermerilda's rapid and complicated explanations, and she simply would not, or could not, give me a direct answer. Count Cesare had been hurt, and was now seriously unwell, and in high fever. The Contessa was too distressed to appear, and wished to see *no one*. Signora, the other Contessa, was in bed; il Conte Egidio was with his brother. Signor Herwegh? Oh, *il Signor scultore* had—well, I really could make nothing out of that stupid Ermerilda; the only *approach* to information I could educe was that Herwegh, notwithstanding the fury of the tempest, had left the villa at midnight, and had returned to Rome. The girl was such a fool, or perhaps only pretended to be one—and Italian servants are so

exasperatingly secretive—that I fully expected to encounter him in the *salon* when I went downstairs. I didn't, however. Frau Röhrich I found in the most blissful ignorance of everything. She asked if we had had another delightful evening. I briefly explained why we had to leave at once: and, to be succint, thus it is that I am at the Palazzo Malaspina again. I am too tired, and indeed too overwrought, to write any more just now. Of course, now, any letter will reach me after a tiresome delay, as it will have to be forwarded from l'Ariccia.

Addio, dear Odo. ILSE.

XX.

From the Count to the Countess von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,
January 9.

Could I hope to find anything here for which you still retain the faintest interest, dear Ilse, I would gladly write about it, but if you were in

the planet Mars there would hardly be less sympathy between us. We seem to breathe different atmospheres, speak different tongues, and, worst of all, think different thoughts. This is not complaint or reproach, but merely a temperate statement of facts. Your letters from the Villa Mallerini have come, and have produced, believe me, sufficient effect. I did not attempt to answer promptly, and I refrain now from superfluous and unwelcome comment, for I confess I don't understand your movements. I don't know what you are doing down there, what you want of those people, what you really think of them, what you perceive, or what you choose not to perceive. I have already given my views succinctly, and if they did not convince you, reiteration certainly will not. I may be in a bemuddled condition—groping in a dense fog, but I cannot think it. So I suppose I shall have to wait till you run your course, and stop of your own accord; and, meanwhile, general topics are safest.

it plainly, the thing I want. It is the spirit of "Light," with hopeful eyes, an uplifted torch, and striding swiftly on. She must be beautiful and bold, for whoever fights the powers of darkness needs courage. Make her strong and fearless enough to face an angry mob. You will doubtless be surprised at my temerity in approaching you on your own ground, yet I'm not an out-and-out Vandal, after all. It seems to me I have a vague suspicion of the meaning of such a life as Albrecht Dürer's, or Michael Angelo's, or Velasquez's, or Millet's, or many I could name. It is the earnestness, the profound conviction that I revere in art as in other things, but—there, I am at it again, and I presume to call the Kruses stubborn!

And so our little world revolves—far, very far from you. Do you need me? Do you want me? Are you really happy down there, Ilschen? Are you getting what you want?

ODO.

One word about "Light." It is for the Club lecture-room. It is not in your line, I presume. Order it where you please, and make what terms you think right. You will know better than I what I want. I make no condition, except one —I don't want Herwegh to have anything to do with it.

XXI.

From the Countess to Count von Jaromar.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
January 9th.

MY DEAR ODO,—

To-day I am tired, and am going to give myself up to letter-writing (a little), reading (not too much), scheming (just enough to delight, and not to excite me), and dreaming (and as that in my present mood is most tempting of all, it shall have my freest largesse of time).

I am first about to clear off some correspondence, "all about nothing and everything," as Lotta Heideloff's little girl is wont to say with an

air of profound wiseacredom. What an absurd child she is! Have I told you about her before? The other day she was present when several people were drinking coffee and talking scandal. Herwegh made some remark about a Marchese Somebody, to the effect that it would be commonplace to say of such a man that he had broken all the Ten Commandments; the number should be extended at least to thirteen. Ulrich Heideloff laughingly responded, "I have always heard, Friedrich, that you and the Marchese were inseparable!" I saw little Ottilie look fixedly at her beloved friend. "Ottilie," I asked, "do you believe that Herr Herwegh has broken all the Commandments?" She glanced at me with calm, unsuspecting eyes as she replied in all seriousness, "Some of them I think he has only *cracked*!" Is not that far more delightful than the most cynical sayings of a Heine or a Voltaire? Friedrich overheard it, and with a whimsical smile remarked *sotto voce*, "I have never married, and now shall

probably go to my grave without the privilege of owning such a child. Yet I don't feel as though a new terror were added to Death!" I like him when he is whimsical, not when he is cynical. I told him that Lucrezia and I were going to become great friends. He smiled, but made no reply. I was displeased, and he saw it. "Friendship," he then added, in a tone that might or might not indicate sincerity, "friendship is impossible between a prince and, say, an office clerk; it is almost as difficult between a handsome man and a beautiful woman; between two beautiful women it is but a dream, a poetic fiction."

"You have little real belief in women," I replied scornfully. "On the contrary," he rejoined, "physiologically as well as otherwise, I think women superior to men. Woman is the nervous part of humanity, as man is the muscular."

Count Kourbaline, who is on the staff of the

Russian embassy here, and an intimate friend of Herwegh's though to me an objectionable man in every way, overheard and joined in our criss-cross conversation. But I won't repeat what was said, though some of it was amusing enough, and a little, a very little, even witty; still, it was all *banal*—at least to me, who know so well that Herwegh is not really the man it is his pleasure in public to pretend he is. If he were, I should hate him, for all his greatness as a sculptor. Indeed, I shall tell him this some day.

Of course, the talk drifted on to marriage. "There is only one thing essential to a satisfactory union," said Kourbaline. "Friendship," I hazarded; "Separation," suggested Herwegh. "Neither," exclaimed Kourbaline, "but merely that the husband should be deaf and that the wife should be blind." Somehow, I can't enjoy these things as some people do. Even Lotta, who had joined us, laughed at what she called the Count's wickedness, and yet what he said

was to her obviously a natural enough saying. I sometimes think I am very stupid. She (Lotta) turned to Kourbaline and told him to beware; that there was a certain Viking Count away up in the north, who might appear at any moment. He made a fantastic grimace, and said something in French so rapidly that I did not catch it. It was something about Orpheus. I wonder what it was. Before I could ask Herwegh, who had turned for a moment to speak to some one passing, Kourbaline had seated himself at the piano and was singing blithely:

> "*Du meine Seele, du mein Herz,*
> *Du meine Wonn', O du mein Schmerz.*"

And now I am tired writing to you. Don't be offended, for I am going to scribble to you at intervals betwixt this and bedtime; only, as I hinted to you at the outset, I am in a variable mood to-day. I must enjoy my holiday in my own way. I shall write those little notes I spoke of. By the by, I have received a commission for

another Undine, and whom do you think from? From a Grand-Duke, though his extremely High and Remote Mightiness is as yet known to me only through his intermediary, Count Kourbaline. And then I shall dip into some French books that have come for me—Bourget's *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*, and Guy de Maupassant's new novel, and my favourite Shelley, perhaps. And then I shall dream and idle till lunch, and idle and dream till Signora Lucrezia makes her promised call. I wish I had never gone to the Villa Mallerini. Indeed, indeed, it would have been better had I flown northward, if but for a glimpse of you and the others.

[Afternoon.]

It is only so in point of fact, for it has not yet struck two. I have lunched entirely off fruit and that delicious white curded goat's milk the Romans call *riccotta*, and a little of the light, delicate golden wine of Montefiascone, which to

my depraved feminine palate is superior even to the best Orvieto, which you told me to thank the Gods for each time I put it to my lips. It has been a pleasant day. I seem to be in a dream. One loses so much in even the best dreams, not knowing them to be dreams. Perhaps I may think differently some day. But to-day I am young, and alive, and happy; and oh, it is so good to be so! Christmas-day seems to me not only far away now, but almost as if it too were a dream. I wish it were, and that it would not recur. Have you ever noticed how naturally every beautiful thing either turns gold or lends itself to a golden touch? I watched a long sunbeam steal through the curtains beside my open window and turn the olive-green shades into a richer tone; then upon a Japanese screen, which it made positively radiant; then it lingered upon an old vellum-bound volume which I picked up at a book-stall in the Via Giulio Romano, and caused it to gleam like ivory in firelight. Ah,

there! how a fugitive word will allure one. My sunbeam has wandered into a corner beyond my old tulip-wood piano, and there I leave it; for that word "firelight" has called up Jaromar, and all the dear homely comforts and quiet beauty and—what can I call it?—northern delight. I have a sudden longing for the north at its bleakest, the pines heavy with snow and creaking in the rush of the wind; the boom of the sea calling, calling, through the darkness; and above all for a corner in a certain room I know of in Schloss Jaromar, with no light save from a great pine-log fire, and no one speaking, not even you—no sound except the wind around the Schloss gables and the *crack—crackle—crash* of the glowing logs. Oh, never believe that I am not as much a Northerner as you! I could give up just now my well-loved Rome, just as I have thrown aside that tiresome Guy de Maupassant. Fancy if the world were nothing but *Boule de Suif* and *Bel Ami* on a large scale! And I could——

[Four o'clock.]

No Lucrezia yet; but Herwegh has been here. I have had a long and earnest talk with him. He is not the man you suppose him to be. Even I have been unjust to him. You will perhaps think better of him when you learn that he spoke to me frankly about my position here, and even warned me not to see too much of the Rasellas and their English friend St. Clair, and all that set; indeed, he went as far as to put me on my guard with Count Kourbaline—and this though Kourbaline is one of his intimate friends! I am somewhat perturbed, I confess, at his not having spoken to me about the Mallerinis before. I told him frankly that he had no right to mislead me. But he was so contrite, and I saw too that he had erred out of loyalty to his friends, that I forgave him. It appears that Cesare has an evil reputation, and that there are even unpleasant rumours about Lucrezia. In a word, he was quite earnest about my seeing no more of her;

and suggested in the most cavalier fashion that I should simply refuse to see her. This, of course, I cannot meanwhile consent to do. I have been her guest, and I have no reason for considering her a woman best left to her own devices. I cannot help regret at Herwegh's having spoken so strongly against her, though he obviously did so with reluctance and only to serve me. I did not tell him she was coming this afternoon, but neither did I let him understand that I was going to act on his advice unreservedly. This naturally led to the subject of the Christmas party and the sudden break-up. I could see that Herwegh was unwilling to say all he knew, so I did not press him. I gather that there was a duel between Cesare and one of his acquaintances whom he had wronged (or who had wronged him; I could not make out which), in which Lucrezia was also in some way involved. Friedrich, I imagine, was Cesare's second.

But I dropped the subject when I saw it was unwelcome. Herwegh surprised me by depreciating Rome as an art-centre, for a sculptor at any rate. He told me a great deal about Parisian art-life, and the great advantages of all kinds. He has made me quite in love with the idea. Imagine! he has taken a charming villa, with an immense studio, between St. Cloud and Suresnes —the loveliest part of the Seine near Paris. He declares Paris is the only place for a sculptor. I am so sorry that he thinks of leaving Rome. He is certainly the most astonishing person, to keep all this quiet till he had concluded his plans —for he said little to the point at the Villa Mallerini.

I asked him what Count Kourbaline said before he turned away to sing. He laughed maliciously and replied that the Count was of the same mind as somebody else who wrote, or said, that for one Orpheus who went to hell to seek his wife, how many husbands would not even go

to Paradise to find theirs. I said what I thought, and think, that Count Kourbaline is an essentially vulgar man, however high his social position may be; and that I was well content to drop the acquaintanceship. I think Herwegh was somewhat surprised that I showed so much resentment. But, to tell the truth, I am tired of these endless gibes at married people, and at women as women. I am glad to say that Herwegh absolutely agreed with me, and even admitted that his own habitual cynicism was only skin-deep. He has asked me to do something that makes me very proud and happy. He has been commissioned to draw a series of outline-illustrations to accompany the text of the Austrian poet Hamerling's fine poem *Ahasuer in Rom;* and he has begged me to collaborate with him. He has not time to do the whole series, nor, he affirms, the ability (or, as I should say for him, the mood); and he wants me to undertake ten or twelve. As, naturally, outline drawing has been my strong

point with the pencil, I have agreed to try. It will take much time and thought to decide which lines or passages contain the happiest inspirations. Herwegh tells me that even financially it may be well worth my while, both immediately and prospectively.

Altogether I am in a very elated state of mind. Delightful possibilities are opening before me. It has all excited me so much that I am half inclined to forfeit my day's idleness, after all. Ten minutes after he had left, I saw that my room was just flooded with sunshine, and if it were not for Lucrezia's promised call, I should have gone out into the beautiful world, to rejoice in the sunlight and the gladness everywhere. How lovely winter is in the south.

But no, I must wait for Lucrezia. I am now lazily going to lie down and dream over *Ahasuer in Rom* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. One will help the other, I am sure.

I'll keep this open to add the account of the

Mallerini's visit, and to tell you how the evening is to be passed. I wonder what she wants to confide or discover. Her sister-in-law sighed for France in the most ridiculous way; did I tell you? The woman had not been in Italy ten days!

Life certainly must be very pleasant in Paris. It is the centre of the Art-world. Fancy how charming in the spring months to live in a shady place on the Seine and yet quite close to Paris. And the freedom, and joyous company, and the——oh, but I must not think of it! And yet, why not? This was to be my day of dreams.

Addio, sposo mio; I go to my sofa to dream.

[Evening.]

How horrible people can be! I feel very wretched to-night, and wish I were—well, anywhere save in Rome.

I have not much to tell you, after all. Lucrezia Mallerini came at five o'clock, and as she is not

long gone, and it is about to strike six, her visit has been for less than an hour. It seems three times as long.

She told me a very wild and improbable story about herself and a lover, and Cesare's cruelty, and, in a word, more than confirmed Herwegh's hints about her having been implicated in the duel on Christmas night. I was very distressed; her manner, too, was so extraordinary. Once I thought she was going to spring at me. At last I became wearied, and let her know that she had told me at once too much and too little, and that I could not see, either way, how I could interfere in the affair, directly or indirectly. Upon this she suddenly forgot herself completely. It is quite needless for me to repeat what she said, but I rose, and quietly begged her to withdraw, as the interview could now be productive of no good, and was most painful to me.

I do not know what the upshot would have

been, but as I opened the door, there, to my astonishment and Lucrezia's consternation, stood her brother-in-law, Egidio Mallerini. "Your husband is seriously ill," he said, but in a harsh and almost insulting tone, while he not only did not lift his hat to me, but gave me a look which made me almost cry out.

"Your husband is seriously ill; so be so good as to recover from your hysterics and accompany me without delay."

I cannot repeat what she said. She is a slanderer as well as a traitorous and evil woman.

It all makes me so unhappy. Oh, how I wish I had never met this woman—that I had never gone to their wretched villa!

P.S.—I have just time to scribble these closing lines. Lilien Röhrich has sent for me to join them at dinner and go on afterwards to the opera to hear Mascagni's new piece. I am so glad merely to get out of my rooms and be

amused. But don't worry about the Lucrezia episode. I shall soon forget the pain she has caused me. And, indeed, *withal,* I *am* sorry for her. But—

XXII.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA,
January 14.

Thanks for your good letter about Christmas, and about your work, which always interests me; and I am going to tell you about my work, Odo, believing that you really do care to hear about it, though ever and again there is something in your letters that makes me fear you think I am here to carry out a whim or an unreasonable desire, instead of what I myself certainly take to be a duty. And—but no; explanations of arguments in letters are even more annoying and confusing than they are apt to be orally.

I am very happy in the progress I am making.

Under Herwegh's guidance and suggestion I have not only learned much, but (what I now recognize to have been imperative, though I had but a vague prevision of it) have had to unlearn scarce less. My little "Rose" and "Lily," of which I wrote to you so jubilantly, were unhesitatingly condemned by my *maestro* when he saw my studies for them. "It is well that they are only in clay," was the sole comment he made at first. And now, alas!—No! *Evoë O!*—they have vanished into nothingness as though they were no whit less imperishable than their far more beautiful prototypes, which can be bought at any moment of the flower sellers for a few *soldi*.

I have learned a great deal, too, from long study in the sculpture galleries of the Vatican and the Capitol—not from *visiting* them, but by studying every square inch, every fugitive touch of the modelling thumb or the finishing chisel, in one, or at most two or three, of the noblest works only. Sometimes Herwegh has generously spared

an hour or so to act as my *cicerone*. It is so delightful when he can come, for, besides his rare technical skill and knowledge, he knows all about each sculptor's life, and work, and true rank; and, moreover, I verily believe there is not a Greek legend with which he is unfamiliar. I am ashamed to find how ignorant I am about the history even of my own art. Again I have spent some happy hours at the Borghese, the Rospigliosi, and other private collections. I have been singularly touched, too, by one thing. In the Prince Borghese's small but, oh, so lovely collection of ancient ivory-sculpture, there are three exquisite pieces—a short frieze, probably representing Dionysos with two beautiful Bacchantæ; a small urn, that might indeed be a drinking-cup, with nothing but a large butterfly and some strewn poppies; and the figure of a young faun. It was the faun that first attracted my attention. I did not understand the Greek inscription minutely cut in the little block, but Herwegh told me it was to the effect that

"Rhodope, the wife of Sionòs, had made this Faun." It was this Greek woman also who made the urn and the frieze. Almost nothing is known of her, though the legend that Herwegh related touches me strangely. The date of her birth or death, of her exact period even, is unknown; but one or two confused reports indicate that Sionòs was a warrior, and lived in the hill-country beyond Athens, while Rhodope had left him for love of her art and had settled in Corinth. He became jealous of her fame, and angry at her long absence, and sent her word that she was no wife of his. Yet she would not return, and, instead, vowed that she was wedded to her art, but that if she did join hands with any man it would be with Phaon of Helioskios, a sculptor like herself. Sionòs thereupon sent word that she might straightway carve her own urn, as the day of her rejoicing was at its end. But here the legend stops. I think that Sionòs either came himself and slew Rhodope, or sent some one to poison her; but

Herwegh declares that she served her art and her happiness, and foiled Sionòs, by going to Syracuse with Phaon, and lived joyously there in that great and wealthy city.

I have thought often of Rhodope's story. I wonder how much of it is true. Do you know, it is not all fancy on my part, or mere flattery on that of Herwegh, to say that there is a strong resemblance between her work and my own. I am impressed by this more than I can well say. Are the old stories true? Do we, indeed, re-live our lives in varying circumstances? And if so, am I Rhodope indeed, though a Prussian *Gräfin* in Rome, instead of an Athenian lady in Corinth or Syracuse? Ah no, for Graf Odo Jaromar is a very different person from the barbarian Sionòs; and, besides, *this* Rhodope does not wish to stay always in Corinth,—that is, Rome. If Syracuse, otherwise Paris, call her one way, the valleys of Helicon, otherwise Rügen, call her the other!

But I forgot to tell you that after condemning

my wretched little flower-statuettes, Herwegh (who nevertheless still thinks that carving in ivory is my *métier*) assured me that I must adopt an altogether freer method in my work. He has forbidden me to touch the chisel at all just now, except to finish my commissioned Undine. The "Emilia Viviani" he says promised splendidly, but is spoilt by what I had vainly hoped was refinement, but which he justly calls mere prettiness; and so I have heroically—for it caused me a pang—demolished it also. All the same, I hope for a true success with the "Emilia" that is in my mind. Well, I am to model *roughly* and on a large scale, rather over than under life size. And thus it is that I am working in the rough (of course at Herwegh's studio, for it would be impracticable here) at two figures, one a Hamadryad, and the other a Young Shepherd. Both are from the same model, the beautiful boy I saw on the Campagna one day—you will remember my telling you about him? Herwegh went searching till he found him,

arranged with him and his shepherd-father, and so each morning, except *domenicas* and special *festas,* in walks through this southern side of Rome from the Porta Furba, my shy, handsome Giovan' Antonio, or "Vanni" simply, as his parents call him. Poor boy, he was so shy at having to pose as a model, though many of his fellow *contadini* do so. Herwegh laughed, and said he would soon get over that; but as yet it is quite pathetic to see how his large brown-black eyes wander with a strange apprehensive look from Herwegh's beautiful Venus Anadyomene and Lilith and his unfinished "Sin" (a lovely and seductive female figure modelled with extraordinary grace and power, and with marvellous winsomeness of expression), to me, and then to the inchoate clay that is slowly taking shape under my hands, then again at me, then at Herwegh and his "Sin," and so over and over. Once, when Herwegh was out, for he does not allow a model to speak a word during a sitting, I asked Vanni if he were happy.

"No," he said, with a kind of stern candour, "I am chill sitting here like this, and my heart burns with anger when he, *il scultore tedesco,* makes me stand naked on yonder wooden block—before—before *you* and—and—these other women." I could not help smiling at my being thus associated with Venus and Lilith. I do believe the boy thinks they are as much alive as I am! I tried to explain; but he turned his great eyes on me, and asked with a bewildering simplicity, "Have you told Mary, the most pure and most blessed Mother of God, that you sit here daily and look at these shameless women, and that you take clay and make an image of me for—for—ah, Dio mio, I know not what!" and here the strange youth broke down with a momentary nervous sob, and crossed himself at least thrice.

But, none the less, I am getting on. I am working at this "Hamadryad" and "Young Shepherd" with a sense of freedom and vigour such as I have never known before. It does not

matter how roughly I model them, Herwegh says: anything so long as I do not make them neat and dainty and pretty. "A work of art without breadth of treatment is, essentially, a contradiction in terms;" this is the text of many a serviceable lesson he has given me.

[Later.]

I left off writing to go for a *giro*, as they say here. Sometimes I grow so restless that you would scarce know me. I cannot even listen long to music. If in company, I am bored; if alone, I am weary. Perhaps it is due to the scirocco; we have had so much of it the last week or two, and the Romans declare that in a bad scirocco one expends two breaths of vigorous life for each whiff of relaxing air one inhales. And yet, to-day at any rate, it is not a wet or gloomy scirocco, and the atmosphere is of a lovely, silvery, delicate pearl-grey. I went out and stood for some time leaning on the terrace over the Spanish steps.

Rome looked so remotely beautiful; a city of dream. The Janiculum and Monte Mario were darkly grey, but the rest of the city was in tone like a vast moonstone or opal looked at through gauze. It was all so silent to me. Two little boys, disengaged models, in exaggeratedly picturesque costumes, were gambling with centésimi on one of the steps beneath me, and further away a girl and an older woman, clad in vividly bright yellow and orange-barred shawls and with thick red, white and blue serge aprons, exchanged confidences. Beyond the sudden sharp cries of the boys and the hum of the women's talk, I was scarce conscious of other sounds. Some distance away to my right I could of course catch the tinkling fall of the Accademia Fontana, and below me I could both see and hear the splash of the great fountain in the Piazza; but both those sounds were part of the dream. All the usual traffic seemed to be at a standstill, or the noise of it to be muffled by the breath of the scirocco.

Then I went down the Spanish Stairs, and hesitated awhile whether to drive to the Janiculum or to the Villa Borghese. I did neither, but, after having seated myself in my little open *vettura,* and given myself keen pleasure by simply loading the front seat with winter roses and camelias and long sprays of yellow wattle from the Riviera, drove out to the Ponte Molle, across the Tiber (which gleamed like a long broad ribbon of shot silk, mostly silver-grey), and then back and round by what was Antemnæ in the old Etrurian days. There are few flowers anywhere in that part of Rome, even in April, and yet the air was full of exquisite fragrances. I am, as you know, very sensitive to odours, the subtle half-hidden scents of shadow-loving plants, the delicate thrills of perfume from wild growing things, and perhaps above all to the intoxicating breath of the earth when the sun steeps it in hot light, that strange smell as of the living body of the world. Just before entering the Porta di San

Popolo a whim took me to drive up the gloomy Via delle Mura. I wish I had not gone. It was desolate, and dark and chill. I don't know *what* could have made me so depressed. Don't laugh at me when I tell you that the stupid tears at last came to my eyes. How I dislike camelias—melancholy deathly flowers! Besides, they have neither fragrance nor pleasant associations; they always seem to me as if they had been *made,* and had not grown as other flowers grow. Before we drove in at the Porta S. Pancrazio I threw them all away — everything except the sweet smelling wattle-sprays.

And now I am going to bed; I am tired. But I am feeling better. Such a charming note from my friend awaited me. I am to try my hand at portraiture to-morrow, for poor Vanni is unwell and can't come in to Rome for a week. Herwegh suggests that I try to model his head and features in the guise of Phaon, and he will do me as Rhodope. I look for a happy week's

work—for we shall have the studio to ourselves for at any rate the first five days.

I shall be too busy to write perhaps, so you know what to think if you do not hear from me soon.

Addio,

Your affectionate but tired

ILSE.

P.S.—A letter has just come from Lucrezia Mallerini. I am not going to open it. I shall either return it, or destroy it. Do you think I am right or foolish?

XXIII.

From the same to the same.

PALAZZO MALASPINA.

This is the third letter to you I have begun within the past hour. The others are torn up—as this may shortly be.

How am I to tell you? What am I to tell

you? I would give—oh, God knows what I would give to be able to avert this bitter pain from you.

Odo—Odo—you are still my best friend! Can you help me? No one else can. Oh, how am I to tell you? What can I say? I have had a terrible shock. But oh, the pain, the pain at my heart!

But you *must* know, and from me; it is unavoidable. Gladly would I bury it all, and forget it, and Rome, and all that has happened—but I cannot, I *cannot*. I could never respect myself; no, I could never even see you again if I were to be silent upon this misery I have brought upon myself.

I will try and tell you all.

You will see I shirk nothing when I tell you at once that the past week—till yesterday—has been, no, I could not even then call it the *happiest*, and yet I have no other word for it, unless I say the most thrilling week in my life. I rose each morning as if the world were a beautiful

dream, and it needed but the exercise of creative will on my part to make it a reality. From the outset I made such progress with my sculpture that I was almost startled at what I felt within me, at the new and triumphant power that seemed to be shaping every thought in my mind and guiding every touch of my fingers. Even when I was not working the hours passed as though they were minutes. We went everywhere together; we were always together. I saw none of my friends, and even Lilien Röhrich left me undisturbed when she perceived how preoccupied I was. In the evenings we strolled to and fro beneath the ilexes of the Accademia Fontana, and talked of all things, and above all of our work, and what we were to do, and alas! of Paris, and what lay awaiting us in the near future, all unseen and unguessed even. Sometimes he came home with me, and we spent hours reading "Ahasuer," and imagining some illustrations and outlining others.

Yesterday I went to his studio as usual. Vanni was at the door. He asked me if *Il Tedesco* were ill or angry, because he had told him to go away, to return towards evening. I said a few kind words, and arranged a sitting for next day, and then went in.

He was singularly reserved, and after our greetings were over I began my work in silence. A little later I heard a curtain drawn, and looked round. There I saw a bust of myself, though in every way beyond me in its strange beauty. It was Rhodope. On the floor lay the fragments of what had been Phaon. "That clumsy Vanni did it, Ilse, but it does not matter. Here I am, I, your Phaon. Which is it to be? Shall we go to our Syracuse, or do we stay in this Corinth, and (and he pointed to the broken bust and strewn fragments) and *you be responsible for this!*"

I cannot tell you what happened thereafter. God knows with what pain you have already

guessed it all. And I spare you what I would fain spare myself in remembrance.

I was swept away by his burning words, by his golden promises, by the rapturous hope and passion in his eyes. And oh, Odo, I *did* love him. Forgive me, but I cannot keep it from you. It may not have been the deepest, the truest love; it may all have been foredoomed to failure; I cannot say—I know nothing—for I am blind and deaf and dumb in my misery.

Before I left the studio that afternoon I had promised to go away to Paris with him; to begin a new life there; and to forget that I had ever been Ilse Jaro—no, I dare not say it—to forget that I had ever been the Ilse whom you and the dear ones in that distant, distant north had loved and trusted.

I would not let him go out with me. I wanted to be alone.

When I reached the corner of the Vicolo da Tolentino I saw a woman standing, waiting for

me, watching me. It was Lucrezia Mallerini. In a moment, in a flash, came to me with sickening dread, and yet I know not also what sudden exaltation, that she was the messenger of Soniòs. Never, never, never for Rhodope, the faithless wife, that future of which she had dreamed.

No one meeting us would have guessed the dreadful thing that was all about us. Her eyes flamed at me out of her white face. We did not speak but walked on together. There was no need to speak—till we were in my room.

The first thing she said to me when we entered, and I had closed the door, was: "*Now,* will you listen to me?" I had guessed her secret before this, of course; deep down in my heart I suppose I have known it ever since Christmas. "What is it you want with me?" I demanded. Her answer was another question: "Why have you refused of late to see me? Why did you return my letter unopened?" I looked at her steadily, before I spoke again: "I suppose you

loved him, and now hate him because he loves *me.*"

She flung some letters on the table before me, and with a harsh laugh, said: "You fool you believe, no doubt, that he loves you as he has never loved any woman? What is it he wants with you? is it to be Sicily, or Venice, or Vienna, or Paris?" When she added bitterly, "He always spends these visits at one of them, Paris preferably," I think that if I could have killed her by my will, I would have done so then and there.

I laughed at her; told her that she was utterly mistaken if she thought she could come between us; and said I know not what other wild and wicked and foolish thing.

Lucrezia stared at me. "Do you know," she said at last, slowly, "if I thought there were the faintest chance that you two should still go away together, I should kill him—or you." I did not answer, and she went on: "It would be needless to tell you what all men know of him, what even

your good friends, the Heideloffs, can verify; but I shall speak to you of two women whom he has ruined. Nay, you *must* listen; yes, though you should die in the listening. You have doubtless heard the name of one, Olivia Czlemka, the wife of the Polish patriot. The usual end came; the place, in her case, was Paris. Isidor Czlemka, who had forfeited everything for her sake, shot himself. I forget how long it lasted; it does not matter. As for her vicissitudes, after she was left to face shame and disaster, they were not much worse than might be expected; that is, *for a time.* Then she sank, plumb down into the depths—and in Paris, well, in Paris the depths have no bottom."

When Lucrezia stopped and drew a long breath, I was sick with horror. Already some dreadful instinct told me that she was speaking the truth. I made a sign to her at last to go on, if go on she must. "Signora von Jaromar," and the tone of her voice terrified me—"Signora von

Jaromar, I tell you that Olivia Czlemka was, when she first came to Rome, my dearest friend. And now I have to confide to you the story of another woman. She is, perhaps, the most mad fool of all, for she loves him still. Do you know what he is? He is, as the great sculptor, one of the best of men; all that is good in him comes out *there*. As the man of the world, he has a heart that is as a corpse, that can neither see, nor hear, nor feel.

"This woman was the betrothed wife of a Neapolitan count. But, for his sake, she broke off the marriage at the last moment. Her father died ultimately broken-hearted. Before he died he saw her married to the wealthy Florentine, the sixty-years old merchant, Paolo di Paoli. But in the second year of her marriage she met *him* at Bagni di Lucca. She never went back to Florence, nor to the old man who cursed her to the last. *He* took her to Venice. It was the happiest year of her life. Yet not a year, because

before the end of it he had tired of her. He is nearly always kind and gentle, when it is to his pleasure. As a gentleman—it is *he* who calls himself so—he prides himself upon his tact and forbearance. I suppose that when he struck this woman, in Milano, where she had followed him, it was because his self-possession had momentarily forsaken him in the shock of finding that a woman's desperation could survive insult and desertion.

"She did not die; she followed him no further. She did nothing heroic. She had a widowed sister at Bologna, whither she went. A year and a half passed. One day, on the occasion of a ball to celebrate a great national event, a Roman gentleman of high rank was struck by her beauty —a beauty which, strangely enough, had grown and not waned since her Venice-madness. He saw her again and again; and, in the end, he married her. To this day he does not know but that he married the unmarried sister of the widowed Lucia Vescovi of Bologna.

"They went to live in Rome. She was almost happy again. She had a child, but it died. Before its birth she met *him* again. He had settled in Rome. She was fool enough to believe that at least a friendship might be between them. He told her—and perhaps it was true—that he was ashamed of his past; that he was going to devote himself absolutely to his art; that he had great dreams and high hopes; that his manhood was to redeem his youth.

"But the end was just the same: of course. His passion was born anew. He said that it had never perished, but he lied. And she — what would you? She had never loved any one else. After a time her husband grew suspicious of his sculptor-friend. He waited his opportunity; and found it. Then there was a duel. But before this"—when she had gone thus far, Lucrezia abruptly stopped. I knew quite well now what she was about to say, but I waited.

"But before this happened, Ilse Jaromar"—

(and though her voice was like the hissing of a serpent, it seemed to me to resound deafeningly from every nook and corner)—"before this, *he* found that he could again treat Lucrezia Mallerini with insult and neglect and mockery and even brutality; and why? *Because you had come in his way.* I stood between you and him, therefore I had to suffer, and now you, who have in mind and word at least betrayed your husband, what are *you* going to do? Is it to be Venice or Paris over again?"

But enough, Odo. I have forced myself to write every burning word thus far, but now I may spare myself—and you. I did not doubt for a moment. I knew it to be true. The letters she thrust into my hands I read mechanically yet understandingly; shameful, selfish, horrible letters. There was one—not to Lucrezia, but to that other woman: I don't know why it came to be there:—she was an artist too, I saw—wherein he used the same words of love, urged almost the same pleas, as he had done with me.

I grew sick with the horror of it all. Perhaps it is that women of the North are different from those of the South; but I could not unbend or give way either to my shame, or agony of sorrow swallowed up in passionate indignation. I said to her simply that I did not love this man; that, before God, I would never speak with him again, not even look at him if it were in my power to avoid even that degradation. She believed me. She burst into a passion of tears. I could not have wept one tear though my soul's redemption had depended thereon. But at last she rose. Before she said farewell—for we shall never see each other again, never, *never*—she asked me when and where he and I had arranged to meet that evening. I told her. It was under the shadow of the ilex avenue, beyond that hateful Accademia Fontana with its treacherous whispering music. "And you will not go?" were her last words.

And now, Odo Jaromar—Odo, my best friend—Odo, who have given me your honour,

that I might slur it; your name, that I might shame it; your trust, that I might shatter it; here now all is at an end between us.

It would have been simpler to have sent you, as I at first wrote, the briefest line, but *I could not,* coward though I was and am. Perhaps another woman would have sent for you, told you something or all, and thrown herself upon your forgiveness! As you well know, the Ilse whom you once loved is not such a woman.

I give you back your name. I have never been worthy of it. Now, I would not bear it though you were dead and it were mine whether I would or not.

I shall be here a little time yet, for I am not well. Then I shall go away, to England, I think. No one shall know my name or whereabouts except my father. It is the one thing I ask of you, do not let him know *all.*

And so, now, all is at an end. Our hopes—but no, there is no "ours" for me any more. You

called me—not long ago, though God knows how long ago it seems to me now—a child, a foolish girl. There is no longer any girlhood in the broken-hearted woman who writes this letter to you.

And so, once more, good-bye. Perhaps you will think it only too characteristic of me when you see that my last wish is—not for you, the noblest and truest man I have ever known or shall know, but for those with whom I have sinned—that further evil and misery may not come out of this thing. More I cannot suffer, for the agony is not of the body.

After all, let my last wish be for you. There is one near you, a bright, beautiful, and pure life. Is it not a worthier one for you than ever mine could have been?

I am very tired.

ILSE VON ILSENSTEIN.

XXV.

From Mademoiselle Marguerite Borike to the Countess Ilse von Jaromar.

SCHLOSS JAROMAR,
February 2.

MADAME,

Although Count Odo answered quite heartily, "Of course, of course, child," when I asked him this morning if I might venture to send one little word to meet you, I suspect he did not see me or hear a word I said, he was so glad, so glad! For it was the hour that he received the good tidings, and his eyes were flashing, and his face looked as I never saw it, and he was giving orders to everybody at once, and holding the telegram tight in his hand wherever he went, and so eager to be off I could not disturb him again. For there was indeed little time to catch the train, and presently he mounted Baldur and rode away like the wind, and Ete galopping be-

hind on Puck with the valise, could scarcely keep him in sight—even down the beech avenue.

Yet, madame, I hope it is not unfitting that the strange young girl whom you will find in your house should long to lay her *hommages* and her whole heart at your feet. For she has dared to love you from afar, she thanks Count Odo and you every hour of her life for the loveliest and most precious gift on earth—a home, and she has prayed unceasingly to the blessed Sainte Marguerite to give you courage during the long and sorrowful time of your absence, and to restore you safe to your dear ones.

It is beautiful, madame, to be like you—to come like the sunshine bringing sweetness and joy. Sorrow came with me, yet I found such pity, such angel-goodness here, that I wonder if heaven itself can be kinder than this kind world. And if people are so good to me, what must they be to you? Every morning when I have brought

fresh flowers to your beautiful picture, I have remembered this.

Ah, madame, I cannot wait for your home-coming, for the banners, and bells, and flowers, for the smiles and happy tears, and most of all for the great joy in Count Odo's face. It is good to see him glad, when one has always known him sorrowful and lonely behind all the happiness that he gives others. It is beautiful to be the one who alone can give him happiness, to be great and good and wise like you, and to be able to stand beside Count Odo.

Pardon me, madame, that I do not know how to say it better, my deep, deep devotion, my tender thoughts, my gladness,—but since I, in the whole multitude of loving waiting ones, have most reason to love and bless you both, I would if I could make my welcome ring out above all the rest, like one little joy-bell from the loving heart of MARGOT,

THE END.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.

PR5
F35
18